SPECIAL HEROINE DOUBLE ISSUE!

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BEMUSING MAGAZINE

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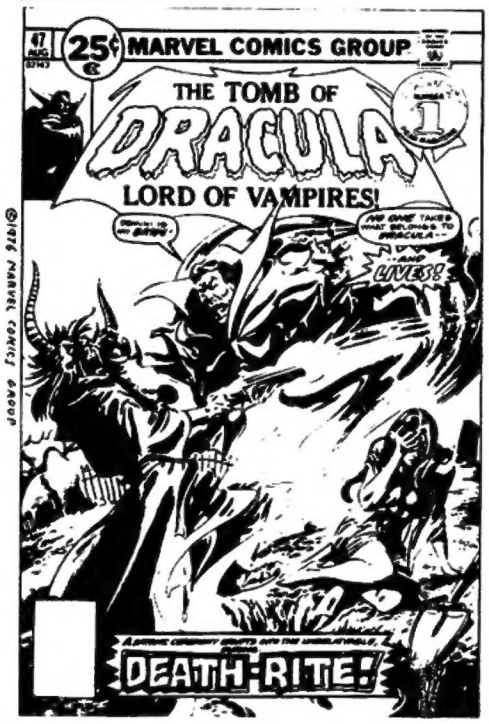
ENGLEHART MOVES TO DC!



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BRITISH COMICS CONVENTIONS
COMICS 101 -- FULL REPORT
COMICON '76 -- PREVIEW

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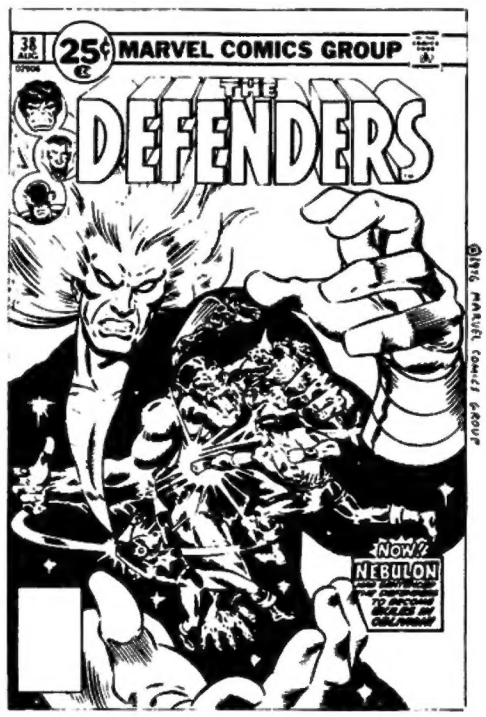
NEW FEATURE FOR KIRBY!



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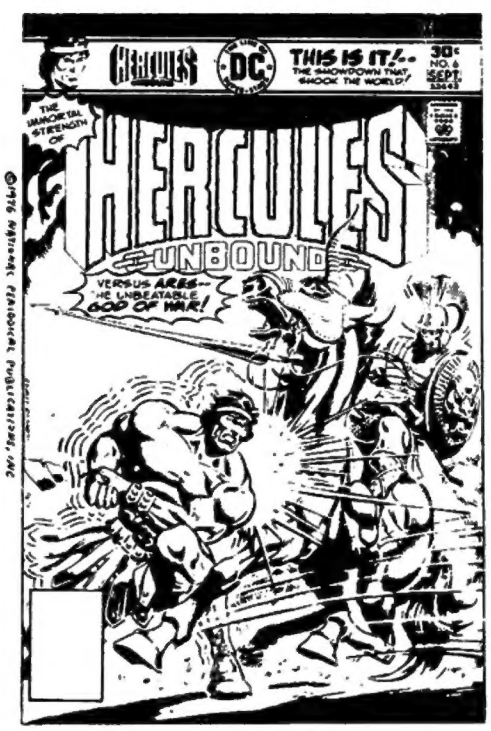

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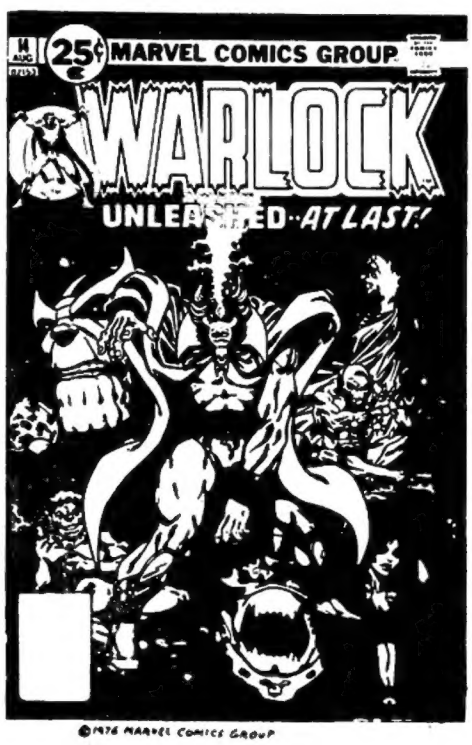

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BEMUSING MAGAZINE ≠9
MAY 1976

editor & publisher: Martin Lock
assistant editor: Nigel Edwards

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BEMUSING MAGAZINE is published five times a year,

by the editor, Martin Lock
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ART CREDITS

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Greg Chown: 7(p), 14
Mike Lake: 22
Joe Matthews: 12
Mercy van Vlack: 2, 7(i), 9, 18, 20
Jeremy Rees: 16
Leslie Stannage: 2, 10
Superswipe: 1, 9
Al Walker: 24

BEMUSINGS

Here, after a 4-month gap, is the return of Bemusing Magazine, full of facts, foibles and fun. You'll see why it took twice as long to get together--it's our first double issue, in two sections, so, naturally enough, it costs twice as much, and for subscribers counts as two issues. The main Bemusing section has four more pages than usual, allowing more room for the regular features and a new one by the name of Bemuscene, while in the middle you'll find "The U.K. Heroine Addict", a 16-page magazine produced here with the trans-atlantic assistance of the Comics Heroines Fan Club, and to be distributed in the UK with Bem and in the USA to all the CHFC's American members. I hope you'll find its emphasis on super-heroines a welcome change from the run-of-the-mill type of articles we get in other fanzines; if you want to join the CHFC, you can start a club account by sending me £2 or so, and copies of the original "The Heroine Addict" and other CHFC publications will be sent to you direct from America--but please specify whether they should be sent by sea mail (at 60p off your account) or by air (at 80p).

Having 24 pages for the regular Bem has been an advantage this time, allowing space for a few things that otherwise couldn't have been fitted in -- but, since I've only just managed to absorb a substantial rise in printing costs this time, more pages in future would mean a higher cost than the current 10p. 24 pages for 12p? 28 for 15p? If Bem does expand like this, then the subscription rate will have to go up --it might be a good investment to subscribe, and make sure of five issues for 70p. It'll be good for Bem's finances -- and save you money, too!

And subscribers already get one bonus--a small zine called "Bemletter", with reviews and letters and so on that can't be fitted into Bem proper.

Congratulations are in order for one of our regular reviewers, Richard Ashford -- a review of the film "A Boy and His Dog" by him is to be found in the final issue of SF MONTHLY. As the magazine (vol 3 no 3) also contains a good deal of Roger Dean artwork, it's well worth 50 of your hard-earned pennies.

And, finally, thank you for your comments on Captain Nuts, which is now confirmed as a Bem regular feature (this time he gets a double-bank strip to celebrate!) -- your opinions and advice on all aspects of Bem are very useful. But now, Bem-9 awaits you... -Martin

NEWS

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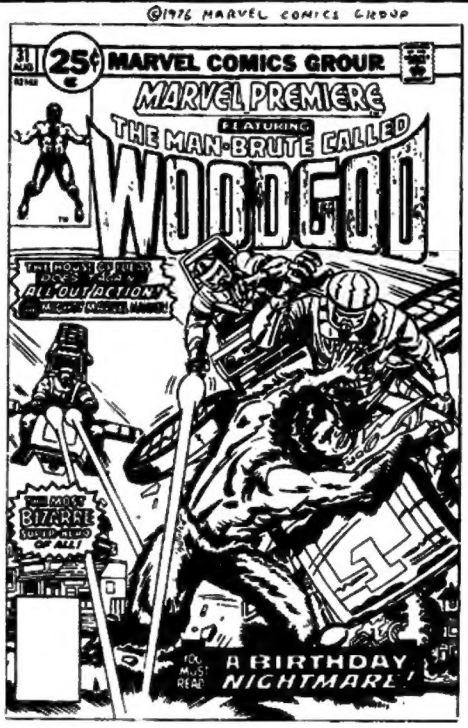

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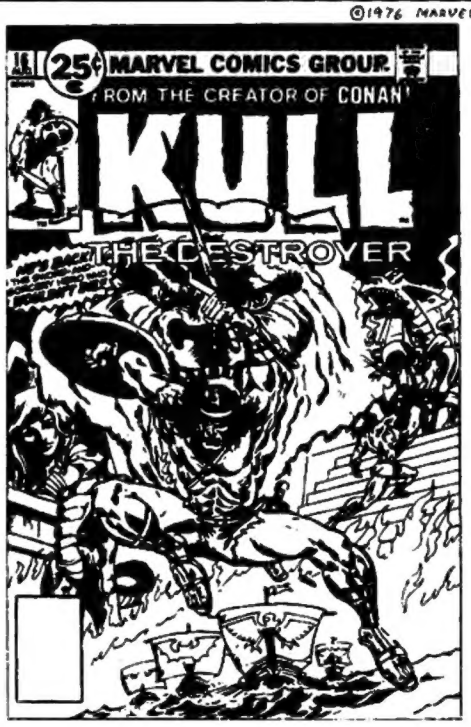


Steve Englehart has left Marvel, after being taken off AVENGERS (Avengers ≠150 will probably be a reprint) -- at DC he will be writing (and editing?) three books a month, quite probably including new titles and with ex-Marvel men Brunner and Starlin. AVENGERS will be written now by Conway, CAPTAIN MARVEL by Claremont, & Wolfman takes over THE PRISONER (based on the TV show) from ≠2, plus DR STRANGE and SUPER-VILLAIN TEAM-UP.

Jack Kirby will take over drawing, writing & editing JUNGLE ACTION with the Black Panther; Don McGregor moves on to scripting Deathlok in ASTONISHING TALES. John Byrne will be the new regular DAREDEVIL artist, while Lee Elias is to take over POWER MAN (now scripted by Marv Wolfman)--Jim Starlin has left WARLOCK.

THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN is the tentative title of a new Conway-scripted monthly, which gives the Web-slinger three new-material books a month. Roy Thomas is preparing a 50c Giant entitled "WHAT IF" to feature Imaginary Tales --if Spider-Man had joined the FF, for example. If contracts go through, Roy Thomas and Howard Chaykin will adapt George Lucas's forthcoming SF film, STAR WARS; a LOGAN'S RUN book, with Marv Wolfman script, is also planned. MARVEL FEATURE will be scripted by Thomas from ≠6.

After a Wolfman-scripted issue, GHOST RIDER moves to the team of Conway & Kane. An issue of CONAN will be reprint, due to troubles with Steve Gan's inking--after this, The Tribe will take over the inks. After two John Buscema issues, Rich Buckler returns to the FF; Gene Colan is now regular artist on HOWARD THE DUCK --whatever happened to Wrightson's promises?

Before Steve Englehart's arrival, DC's plans to cover Conway's departure involved Orlando being Managing Editor of all his titles, with Bob Rozakis Story Editor of FREEDOM FIGHTERS, a revived (50c) YOUNG LOVE, and a new title, Paul Levitz Story Editor of METAL MEN, KOBRA (both written by Marty Pasko), and (written by Rozakis) SECRET SOCIETY OF SUPER-VILLAINS. Jack Harris is story editor of BLACKHAWK (with a change of direction, by Dave Kraft) and KAMANDI (written by Denny O'Neil, with Tales of the Great Disaster dropped), while Orlando takes full control of ALL STAR COMICS (written by Levitz) and PLASTIC MAN. Confusing, eh?

The TEEN TITANS book is back--the writer is Levitz, the artist Marcos, the editor Orlando. SUPERMAN FAMILY is promoted to 8-yearly. Tony Isabella has done some work for DC, including a Freedom Fighters tale -- they're being sent back to Earth-X, where the Nazis have again taken control. Elliot Maggin is taking over scripting HERCULES UNBOUND, and the Pellucidar strip in TARZAN FAMILY, which now features all-new material. WEIRD WESTERN is cancelled, and HOUSE OF SECRETS restored. The new STARFIRE book is written by Maggin, while Kubert's new superhero book RAGMAN is scripted by Kanigher.

"The Great American Comic Book Arts Exposition" has been cancelled, due to hotel and other problems. The Neal Adams art studio, Continuity Associates, has done comics for a range of Peter Pan Record-Comic sets -- Conan (Buscema/Adams), two Space 1999 and two Star Trek sets (Heath/Giordano), and Batman, Superman, Dracula, Wolfman and Frankenstein, all by Neal Adams & Dick Giordano. And more to come!

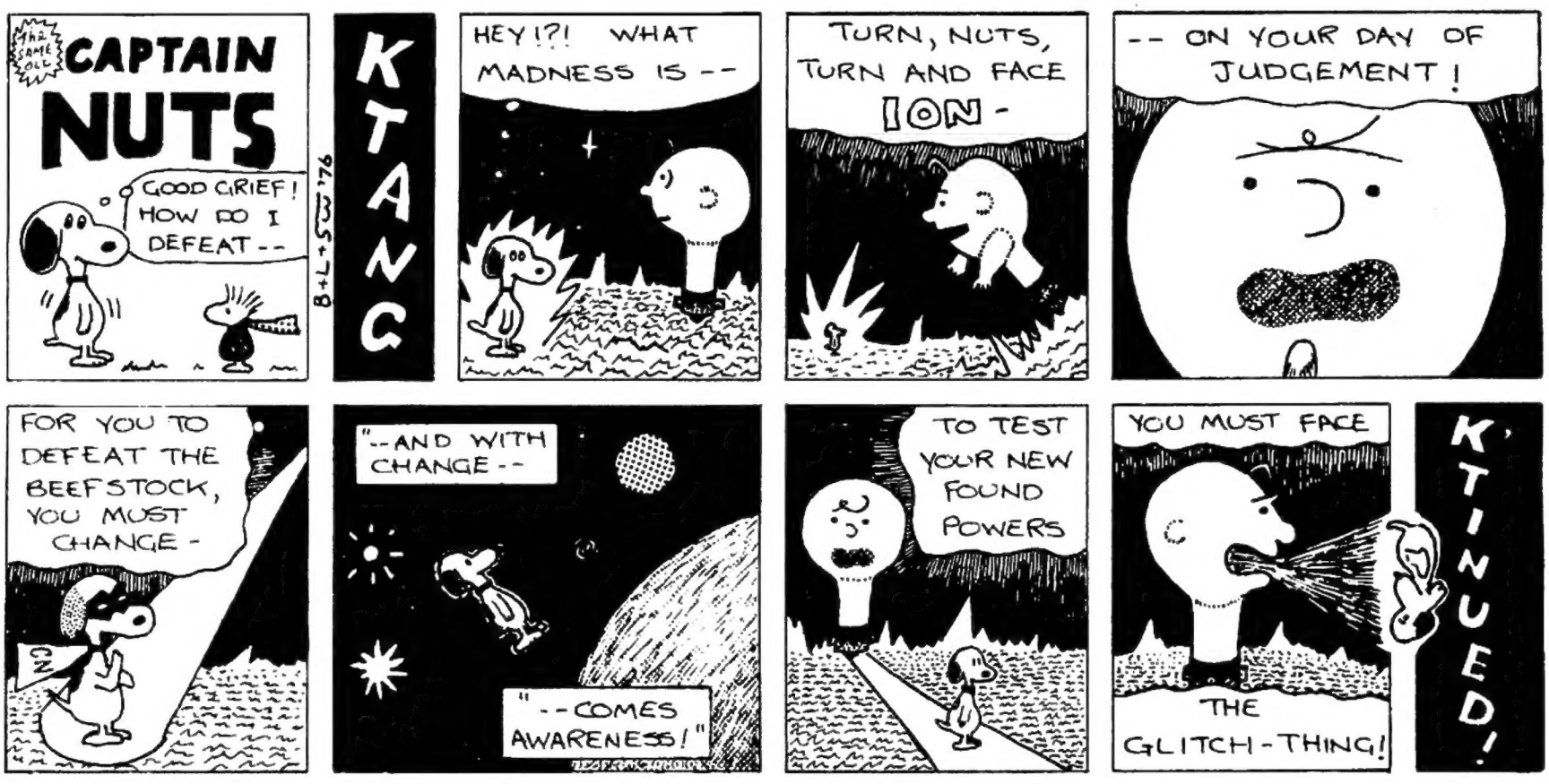
FOLLOW US INTO WILD WORLDS, FOR WE ARE THE LATEST SET OF PAGE FOUR FUNNIES!!

THE WORCESTER UNDERGROUND
SEAL OF VAL
APPROVED FOR LUNACY + GOOD VIBES FOR '76 AWARDED TO:
BEMUSING MAGAZINE + MARTIN LOCK.
RECOMMENDED 'ZINE
APPROVED BY MALT CASELEY + THE WORCESTER UNDERGROUND

A SMALL PLUG FOR THE WORCESTER UNDERGROUND, WHOSE COMICS DIVISION IS RUN BY MARTIN C. CASELEY. THEY PLAN TO PUBLISH A FANZINE SOON, CALLED The Predawn Reticlimax FOR DETAILS OF THE ORGANISATION, CONTACT MART

FANZINE EDITORS! TO WIN THE W/U SEAL OF APPROVAL SEND A COPY OF YOUR ZINE TO 'EM AND HOLD YOUR BREATH! IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION ON COMICS SEND IT TO THEM, WITH S.A.E. AND THEY'LL FIND OUT THE ANSWER.

Chris Ash


THE SAME OLD
CAPTAIN NUTS
GOOD GRIEF! HOW DO I DEFEAT --
B+L+SW '76
KTANG
HEY!?! WHAT MADNESS IS --
TURN, NUTS, TURN AND FACE ION -
-- ON YOUR DAY OF JUDGEMENT!
FOR YOU TO DEFEAT THE BEEFSTOCK, YOU MUST CHANGE -
"--AND WITH CHANGE --
"--COMES AWARENESS!"
TO TEST YOUR NEW FOUND POWERS
YOU MUST FACE THE GLITCH-THING!
KTINUED!

MIGHTY MAN BY L. STANNAGE

HEY! THERE'S THAT SUPER HERO MIGHTY MAN COMING.
THEY SAY HE'S IMMUNE TO PAIN.
DON'T BE STUPID. HOW CAN ANYONE BE IMMUNE TO PAIN?
HIC! HIC! HEE HEE! HIC!
FORGET IT!

REG USPATOFF

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SWAMP THING
STARTLING! THE ALL-NEW!
YOU'RE THE SECRET SWAMP THING— TELL ME— OR DIE!
YOU WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOURSELF IF YOU MISS... THE MYSTERY of ALEC HOLLAND!

©1976 CHARLTON PUBLICATIONS, INC.

If the "Fickle Finger of Fate" was still being awarded (remember Laugh-In?), we'd have two winners this month. First, DC for putting out a £1.00 book "Superman Salutes the Bicentennial" with Superman on the cover and inside only "Tomahawk" reprints, and second Mr Berni Wrightson for announcing he'd draw Howard the Duck and then backing out at the last minute. Congratulations, fellows -- I don't think!

I hear that Marvel will be moving into line with 30 cent comics shortly -- they're already dropping the "still only" tag. But the good news is that both DC and Marvel are trying out regular all new material 50c Giants--WHAT IF, TARZAN FAMILY and SUPER-TEAM FAMILY so far, and more to come. Warren, of course, continue on their merry way, hoping for a boost from the Vampirella film, while Charlton have cut out lettercols and action-hero titles, turning away from fandom and towards TV tie-ins.

A few odd scraps of news? What about this for a DC title--"STRANGE FLYING SAUCER ADVENTURES"!? It's to be a reprint grab-bag in the SUPER DC GIANT series (#27), apparently. And BINKY returns, in an all-new issue (of material from the old inventory) for the peak summer sales period, edited by Joe Orlando. Dave Kraft will take over the "TARZAN the Untamed" adaptation that Conway started before he flitted back to Marvel; after that, Denny O'Neil will adapt "Tarzan the Terrible", which probably refers to the sales figures that led DC to take THE BOOK AWAY FROM Joe Kubert, and give it to the now incredibly busy Mr Orlando.

Try-out issues on such old friends as BLACK JACK TARR (from Master of Kung Fu, by Doug Moench), TIGER SHARK (from Sub-Mariner, by the Devil-May-Care one again), and Chaykin's DOMINIC FORTUNE are planned, while ZARTROS THE GNOME becomes Ka-Zar's sidekick (honestly! I wouldn't kid you. It sounds like an attempt at another Howard the Duck...).

By the way, that Space: 1999 artwork on my page last time intrigued a lot of people. It isn't by John Burns, who used, I gather, to draw the feature for a British comic (Look-In) --rather, it was by John Byrne, and was used as the cover of the third issue of Charlton's colour comic. Okay? On the subject of SF in comics, Gold Key's August issue (#44) of MAGNUS ROBOT FIGHTER features a NEW story!

"Here Come the Bad Guys" is the title given to Stan Lee's third book of comics reprints & lightweight reminiscences. I'd like to deny here and now that the title refers to Martin Goodman, Carmine Infantino, and Jim Warren! A third Calendar is well under way, too, with a nostalgia theme.

Oh, add SOLOMON KANE (Robert E. Howard's puritan adventurer, by Thomas & Chaykin), to the list of characters waiting for a colour book try-out, while Herb Trimpe settles into Planet of the Apes doing the "Jason/Alexander" series, and ultra-prolific John Byrne takes on Super-Villain Team-Up, and Mike Royer becomes Kirby's tame inker on THE ETERNALS.

All in all, the news this last few months has been a bit of a mixture--isn't it always!

Leslie Stannage.

Below is a selection of the comics that I have for sale. Please send an S.A.E. for my complete list. All orders from below will receive my complete list. All comics are either mint or nearly mint unless otherwise stated. Please add 30p per order to cover postage etc.

MARVEL COMICS

AMAZING ADVENTURES: 1.45p; 2.40p; 3.20p; 10-15.15p; 19vg.10p; 20p.5p; 21, 22, 26-30.10p

AVENGERS: 1vg.£7.00; 4fg.£1.00; 6fg.90p; 13fg.50p; 18, 19.40p; 23fg.25p; 30.35p; 44, 45.30p; 64, 66g.25p; 72vg, 78, 83vg, 85, 88, 89.20p; 108, 110, 111, 114, 115.10p; 126, 127.30p

CONAN: 5.45p; 12.30p

CAPTAIN MARVEL: 1.45p; 2-5.20p; 6fg.15p; 7-11, 12vg.15p; 13-16.10p; 23.30p; 24.30p; 35.10p

DARE DEVIL: 1f.£3.00; 3p.50p; 19vg.35p; 20, 23, 26, 27g.30p; 28-42.25p; 47.20p; 49-56.15p; 57f.10p; 58vg, 59g, 60-74, 76, 77, 80.15p; 85, 92, 94, 96-99, 101-108, 112-121.10p

SPIDERMAN: 27f.30p; 28vg.45p; 36.45p; 41vg, 42, 43.40p; 44f.25p; 45vg, 46, 47g, 48.40p; 49f, 50f.25p; 56, 58.30p; 73f.15p; 76g, 81-84, 87, 97.20p; 101.30p; 105.15p; 125, 126, 136, 138.35p

SILVER SURFER: 8g.45p; 14g.35p; 18g.30p

SPECIAL MARVEL EDITION: 15vg.60p

TOMB OF DRACULA: 1g.70p

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY (THOR): 56g.£1.00; 119f.30p; 128fp.15p; 135fg.25p; 144g. 30p; 166.25p; 169.25p; 170fg.15p; 173.20p

D.C.

ACTION COMICS: 75(1944)g.£7.00; 282p, 288fp.25p, 289vg.50p; 290p.20p; 292.40p; 294g.35p; 300, 303vg.30p; 307f.20p; 315vg.30p

AQUAMAN: 1g.60p; 3vg.35p; 4, 5.40p; 6fg.25p; 7f.20p; 8, 9.35p; 10f.20p; 11g, 12.25p; 13.25p; 14g.20p; 15vg.25p; 16-20.20p

ATOM: 1g.65p; 3vg.40p; 5vg, 6.30p; 7g, 8.25p; 9g, 10g, 11fg.20p

GREEN LANTERN: 1nc, 2fg.£1.00; 3vg.60p; 4fg.40p; 5.60p; 6g.40p; 7, 9.45p; 10vg.40p; 11g.30p; 12vg, 13vg, 14vg, 15vg, 16vg.40p; 17f.20p; 18vg.35p; 19fp.20p; 20, 21.35p; 22f.20p; 23, 24g.30p

JUSTICE LEAGUE: 4fg, 5g, 6g.70p; 8f.45p; 9, 10.70p; 11vg, 12.60p; 13fp, 14p20p; 15.50p; 16g, 17-20.40p; 25-30.25p; 31-39.20p

LESLIE STANNAGE.

BEMUSCENE

MORE TALKS, QUIZZES AND FUN FOR EVERYONE AT COMICON 76, PROMISES ROB BARROW!

In our relentless search to bring Bemusing readers the latest reports on British fandom, one of our top reporters was sent off to the wilds of Camden Town, to find out what plans lurk in the heart of Rob Barrow for fandom's top event of the year, the summer two-day con held in an otherwise respectable hotel in the middle of London. After locating "Robaro, the Master of Comic Marts", and persuading him to take the idea of an interview with relative seriousness, this is what we got...

Bem Well, Rob, how many years have you been organising the U.K. comic conventions now?

Rob Um... Three years, but they're late ((he giggles)). I started with the 1974 comicon, though of course I've been involved with the Marts since 1972.

Bem And the 1976 2-day affair is going to be the best yet?

Rob Yes -- and the Comicon will be, as well!

Bem It's going to be more expensive than last year, I gather...

Rob No, it just costs more! But seriously, admission will be 70p for both days, compared with 50p last year, but we are offering more.

Bem Such as?

Rob No, no, you're not catching me like that. Come along and find out for yourself.

Bem But what can you tell Bemusing readers, to persuade them to come along?

Rob We'll have porno films.

Bem Porno films?

Rob Well, actually, no, but that's the only thing I can think of to get them along.

Bem There are films, and panels, and talks, the dealers' room of course, and this year a special art display, I hear?

Rob Yes, there is. And we hope to have Tony Weare, the illustrator of Matt Marriott.

Bem And he'll be talking about his strip?

Rob No, about his TRIP, around America. And Dez Skinn will be giving a talk on how to draw for comics, there's Paul Neary on the artist and his work, and two quizzes. The first will rely on audience participation, and the three or so winners of it will go on to the second quiz on Sunday, where they'll face three dealers for a knock-out contest.

Bem Can you give some idea what the week-end will cost for somebody coming from outside London? Leaving out the way that the money magically evaporates as one browses in the dealers' area...

Rob Not very much -- perhaps about £20 for a hotel room for two days, rail fare, and some food if you're lucky. Less if you watch the films over Saturday night.

Bem I know in past years that dealer pricing has tended to be high, and some people blame this on the cost of tables and the ammount of fairly well organised stealing of comics that goes on. Do you feel that comics on sale are getting to be too expensive?

Rob On everybody's tables except mine they're getting expensive. As for security, there'll be at least 6 floor-walkers (that is, store detective types) on duty at all times that the dealers' room is open. We will also have full registration at the door, which means people will fill their name and address in on a card, and will be issued with a ticket which can be checked by our security people, to stop transferring of badges.

continued...

Bem Security's going to be tighter this year, then?

Rob Yes--that's a short answer for you.

Bem Another problem has been, in past years and at Comic Marts, the number of official and unofficial "helpers" to the dealers that are in the selling area before the ordinary fans are let in, generally getting in the way and buying up all the best bargains.

Rob Yes, that's right. I don't want to give too much away in the interests of security, but we have plans to cut down on this sort of thing quite considerably.

Bem Let's see, I'm sure there are lots more questions I ought to ask. Oh, what sort of publicity are you trying for this year?

Rob Free publicity, basically, plus ads in various fanzines, and posters in specialist bookshops and colleges. We'll get a plug in the Marvel weeklies too, I hope. And we're putting out a couple of thousand free-sheets too, of course.

Bem Well, it sounds as if we'll all be having an enjoyable, if hectic, week-end. So, what are you planning for next year?

Rob A nervous breakdown!

Bem Good idea. But 1977 will be the 10th year of the annual conventions, won't it?

Rob Yes, it will. Nick Landau is insisting that we have a fancy dress parade, as he wants to go along as Shanna the She-Devil. He always seems to win a prize when one is held.

Bem You mean he's entered fancy dress parades before?

Rob Yes, and if he ever stops sending me the payments, we'll publish the photographs in almost every British fanzine!

Bem And I'm sure Dez Skinn will be throwing free comics at the auction audience to make sure they keep awake. Finally, Rob, is there anything else you'd like to tell Bem readers?

Rob There'll be a raffle, with tickets on sale at the registration desk. The main prize will probably be a piece of original art, and also a poster. The winning ticket will be drawn on Sunday, after the auction, and you'll have to be there to claim the prize.

Bem Rob Barrow, thank you -- and the best of luck to you!

And our intrepid reporter hurried back to Bemusing House, leaving Rob happily selling his comics at his Camden Lock (no relation) stall. You'll find further details of Comicon 76 elsewhere in this issue; remember, there won't be a Comic Mart in London before the Con after June 5th, so there'll be a lot of new comics around by August 21st, and also the special tenth issue of Bemusing Magazine. Who could ask for anything more?

THE DO-IT-YOURSELF NEWSZINE by Graeme Bassett

How often have you picked up an old newszine and not realised it? Admit it, there's nothing to be ashamed of. Now, you can use this weird phenomenon to gain fame and fortune with the minimum of effort; because our computers have broken down comics news to the following all-purpose skeleton, using our handy key you can produce your very own news service!

Insert Headline: "COMICS SHOCK"

The really big news of today is that Jack Kirby is joining (1). (2) has stated that he will immediately be given (3) in which he can develop his new, highly innovative ideas. (4) will be put aside, and its creative team put on (5) to compensate for the new magazines. We here at (insert name) wish the King all the best, and are confident he will (6).

After the great success of (7) on British TV, American networks are asking for US rights. In conjunction with this, (8) have bought the US rights to produce a special tie-in edition. To accomodate sponsors, a few slight changes are being discussed, including (9).

The next issue of (10) will be a special re-presentation of (11), to allow Don McGregor to catch up on his other scripting commitments.

(12) is reported to be in trouble sales-wise and will be cancelled if sales do not pick up.

(13) will be a new super-team book from (1).

(14) is being revived, due to unprecedented fan action, while (15) is being cancelled. And finally, we've just heard that (16) is being joined by Jack Kirby. Jack is, apparently, to be given (17) immediately.

KEY: (1)--Months with an 'R' Marvel, months without an 'R' DC, or the Foreign Legion.
(2)--The editor or publisher of (1).
(3)--Any magazines you can think of.
(4)--Spider-Man, Batman, or Stan Lee.
(5)--Sugar And Spike, Fox and Crow.
(6)--Get better soon, grow out of it, or win an Emlock Award.
(7)--Rock Follies.
(8)--Charlton, Chip Goodman, or anybody with a John Bull printing set!
(9)--It'll be re-made with a US cast, or as a cartoon show, with a long car chase.
(10)--War of the Worlds, Jungle Action...
(11)--Any issue of Sergeant Fury.
(12)--Just pick a title!
(13)--Name your favourite old TV series.
(14)--Any book cancelled in 1965.
(15)--A fan favourite, or Frank Robbins.
(16)--The opposite of (1) or (2).
(17)--A head start, Savage Sword of Claw, Sugar and Spike, Plop!, Ugg-Rotten... (Jack Kirby)--Either Gerry Conway, Archie Goodwin, Larry Lieber, or Rick Jones. -GB

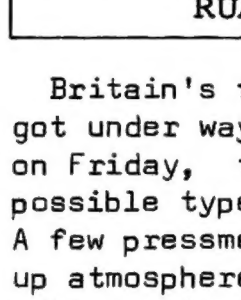
COMICS 101

RUAN LANIHORNE REPORTS

Britain's first convention of British comics got under way at seven o'clock in the evening on Friday, the 19th of March, with the best possible type of start--a cocktail reception! A few pressmen were enthusiastically soaking up atmosphere, while British comic artists and writers mingled with their fans. Frank Hampson was photographed with a selection of the very detailed models he'd used for drawing the Dan Dare saga for Eagle, while in one corner sat a group of discreetly robed Penthouse Pets, who were soon to be involved in the opening of the art display. The few fans of American comics who had come along soon drifted together--Rob Barrow, Richard Burton, and our efficacious editor, for example, with other worthies such as Dez Skinn, Doc Garriock, Phil Clarke and Mike Higgs also in evidence.

Neil Tennant, the U.K. editor of the British Marvel weeklies, plus glamorous friend, were there, and soon Rob was busily arguing with him about their limitations. But soon, all the drink had gone, so our heroes trooped off to a hamburger restaurant that Martin had noticed just down the road; by nine, Mike, Phil, Rob, Richard, Martin, and special guest star Neil were involved in sorting out the intricacies of a Charco menu. The burgers were good, and the ice-creams were enormous--at those prices they ought to be!

On Saturday, I had time to look around the very nicely assorted display of original artwork, which included newspaper strip originals such as Modesty Blaise, Ocean Interpol, Tiffany Jones, and others from all the main London-based newspapers, artwork from British underground comics, Legend Horror Classics, the Marvel Weeklies (including a couple of pages of Barry Smith Conan, and two centre-spreads, one by Frank Hampson and one by Herb Trimpe), work from IPC and DC Thomson comics, Dan Dare, Thunderbirds, Dr Who, Lady Penelope, and a couple of stands set up by Dez Skinn which included work from "Mad", "House of Hammer", and quite a few very "adult" pages of cartoons from the glamour mags he's involved in at General Books. A selection one could go browsing through for hours, in fact; all this and Ron Embleton's "Wicked Wanda" too!



But, at around twenty past ten, the show got on the road, and Denis Gifford welcomed all us "Bofs" (Breezy Order of Funsters), gave us a password for the day (which shows his idea of the mental age of the average attender), and launched into a first part of "A Century of Comics", a lecture illustrated with a number of slides with an uncanny knack of going out of focus. Part two next year, chums!

Other high spots of Saturday were a long, very honest talk on a "Life in a Fun Factory" by Leo Baxendale, the creator, it seems, of half the strips in British comics, from Minnie the Minx to the Bash Street Kids, a talk on female characters in comics by the author of "You're a Brick, Angela", Mary Cadogan, and, after a Dan Dare slide show, Frank Hampson was prevailed upon to talk about his years working

on Eagle. And let us not forget the special informal "Quick on the Draw", presided over by Bob Monkhouse, and featuring an appearance by Wicked Wanda herself (sigh...). Plenty of low and corny humour, and highly amusing--if only Alan Class (the reprint king) hadn't suggested auctioning off the "originals", it slowed the proceedings down terribly. But anyway, after hours the main attraction, in a pub down the road, was Dave Gibbons trying to persuade the gent he called "Mr Emlock" to attempt to write for British comics like Action and Bullet...

While this was going on, the more affluent conventioneers were attending "The First Ally Sloper Award Dinner", with speeches by such as Cardew Robinson and Bob Monkhouse -- the main, gold award went to Frank Hampson, to nobody's surprise.

If the "big guns" had been brought out on Saturday, there was still plenty left for the

closing day. Despite losing an hour's sleeping time as the clocks were put forward, events began only about twenty minutes late with the artist/creator of a number of strips, such as Draculass, the Slimms, Sammy Shrink, and Toy Boy, Terry Bave, talking about his work, with his wife along for moral support. "The Dan Dare story" was another slide show, while "The Editors' Chat" was a panel involving editors from Look-In, TV Comic, Monster Fun, and the old Radio Fun, with no great surprises -- Dez Skinn was meant to be up there with them, but guess who forgot to put his alarm clock on?

After a "Collectors' Brain Trust" concerned with preserving fragile old comics, however, Dez was given a consolation prize--he chaired a discussion on "the Alternative Comic", with the publisher of "Brainstorm" (an underground comic), the man behind "Powerman", the superhero comic drawn by Dave Gibbons and friends for Nigeria, Kevin O'Neill of "Legend Horror Classics" (now defunct), and Paul Fisher and Hunt Emerson of "Dogman" and "Large Cow Comix" -- and there were one or two other people up there on the podium as well. Too many, in my opinion, for much discussion, with too many different views--even a clerical gentleman who distributes Christian literature in Sunday schools! At least it left me with the feeling that alternative comics, for all their setbacks, are still active in Great Britain.

"How The West Was Drawn" was billed in the programme as "Tony Weare on authenticity in the western strip", but it was something much more interesting, and Mr Weare soon had the audience hanging on his every word, for his talk on a year spent travelling through the USA -- and drawing a Matt Marriott strip every day! Afterwards, Rob and Richard quickly got hold of him, and have, I gather, persuaded him to give a repeat performance at the Comicon in August...don't miss it!

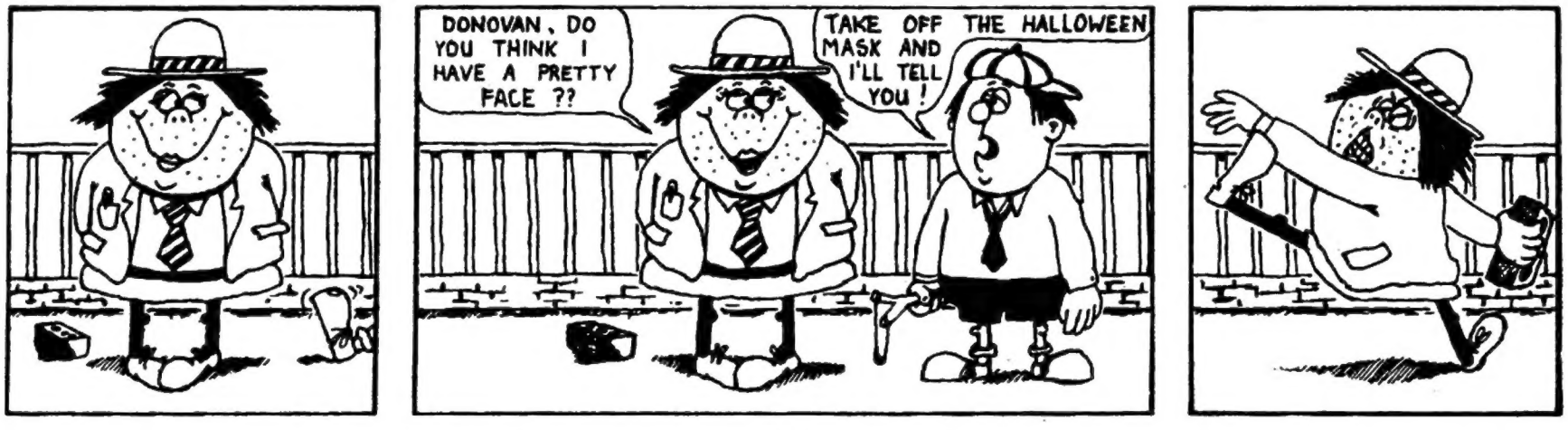
"The Newspaper Strip" was dealt with next, in a panel involving Keith Mackenzie, strip editor of Associated Newspapers and therefore the man who brings us Peanuts, Fred Basset, Flook, and other strips, joined on the podium by John Allard of Garth, Frank Dickens of Bristow, Peter Maddocks of Number Ten, plus Mike Higgs of the new syndicated strip (the Daily Telegraph Syndicate? Why a newspaper that doesn't publish comics should syndicate them I don't know!) Moonbird. Frank Dickens was most amusing, and the discussion was more interesting than average -- the most important revelation was that "Reveille" is starting a comics supplement, which has probably started by the time you read this.

"Looks Comically Familiar" was perhaps the least entertaining feature of the convention, although a couple of the lectures on British comics of the last hundred years came fairly close; three of Denis Gifford's friends, and a confidently ignorant young son of one of the dealers, competed in answering questions on a few slides of old comic annuals, and one of them won a free copy of one of Denis Gifford's recent scrap-books. Oh yes, the quizmaster was Denis Gifford.

And, except for a last auction of the Quick on the Draw sketches, the final item was "The Marvelman Age of Comics", a panel involving Mick Anglo, Denis Gifford, and Don Lawrence, which focussed on that short era of British superhero comic books featuring Marvelman, Young Marvelman and Kid Marvelman--as one who remembers reading about two issues back in those forgotten days when, officially, the US comics weren't imported at all, it did have a certain appeal. Hurried artwork, second-string books that for some reason changed titles, if not numbering, every so often, tiny budgets--but nice to look back on.

And that's the convention for you; expensive by British standards, sometimes hypnotic and sometimes soporific, based on nostalgia and Beanos, enthusiasm and Dan Dare. I'm sorry if this report is too much a catalogue of almost every event in turn, but there was a certain lack of continuity about things--which perhaps demonstrates the diversity of British comics, past and present. Next year? I'll be there!

ESMERELDA & DONOVAN BY L. STANNAGE



FAN-THINGS

A REGULAR COLUMN OF FAN NEWS AND FANZINE REVIEWS, CONDUCTED FOR BEMUSING BY ED SALLIS

You'll have seen Garry Selemba's letter in Panelologist ≠5, I expect; this is what he's told us:

"I would now ask you to help me expose Dave Baber of Morphious. I sent him a story (of my own design), about 5-6 pages done in pencil & indian ink, which took me about 2-4 days to do. He asked for the story to go into ≠8 of Morphious, I sent it to him soon after. Several months have passed, and I've heard nothing of it (I asked him to please return it to me since it took me quite a while to do)--furthermore, he didn't even acknowledge he'd received it.

"Now that Morphious ≠8 is on sale, I should have got a copy, but I haven't, even though I have a subscription. I want Dave Baber exposed for what he is. Is there anything I can do if he doesn't send me ≠8?

"I hope you can spread this around."

Well, "Neon Re-Birth" does appear in issue 8 of Morphious--except for writing letters about it, there's not much you can do, Garry. All you're basically after is a copy of Morphious ≠8 now, assuming this is the story you mean--as a contributor and subscriber, that seems a reasonable request...

I must apologise for giving a generally favourable plug to a certain comic-book shop in Bemusing ≠7; consider it cancelled. No mention of this establishment can be made here, as a court case may well be impending between its proprietor and a leading fanzine, as this fine fellow took exception to a penny-to-the-cent pricing of imports being called above average. It saddens me greatly that the freedom of the press cannot be upheld, and that the law can be used in this way. I can only advise anyone who buys by post to make sure that they aren't paying more than they need, especially in the disguised form of "postage and packing". For a complete service at reasonable prices, may I suggest Colin Campbell

or Paul Burton

--there are other reputable dealers, of course, but I don't think they offer such a comprehensive range of titles.

But, as a change of subject, let's head up to Wolverhampton, and find out how ALL STAR MAGAZINE has come along since last time. Well, Solarman's story is finished, and a text tale of Starr by a Bemusing regular, which editor Dave Edge assures us is pretty special, is "in the can" too. Add an E-Man pastiche by Ruan Lanihorne, and you're almost there--

if you want to join in.

But now, on to the shops in London I do like to visit. "Dark They Were & Golden Eyed" has moderated its comics prices of late, and keeps in stock a vast range of comics and related items (10, Berwick St W1); Reedmore Books, in

the Finchley Road (1, Midland Cres NW3) and at a stall 50 yards down Earlham Street from Cambridge Circus, has the most varied stock you could wish to browse through, rich in imports and other rare items; Martin's Bookshop (17, Rugby St WC1) also has a fair quantity of off-trail items and back issues; and, south of the river, there's Weird Fantasy Bookshop, full of comics old and new.

Compendium I covered last time, so on to the earth-shaking news that Warrior is being put into Fantasy Advertiser, in the hopes that Dez will be able to publish a single fanzine more regularly than two -- as Eric Morecambe would say, "there's no answer to that!"

And now, a few reviews. PANELOLOGIST ≠5 is freshly out, and, at 16½p from George Barnett

is quite a bargain, with photos of Comic Mart regulars (humorously captioned by Nige Edwards), fanzine reviews, a feature on mail-order and other dealers, Mike Cruden, an Emlock column, and lots more. It uses a star rating system for zines--competing editors are prone to award "Panny" a %@?*£!

CROM ≠3 20p from Mark Bilsborough,

is a zine mainly for barbarian fans, featuring this time Warlord, Hunter, Tor, and the normal sort of features (Emlock? Of course!) -- I've high hopes for it. And COMIC SHOWCASE ≠1 deserves a mention 30p from Laurence Piper,

with 24 pages in the CU format -- some good articles and art, plus of course a little less good; nobody's perfect.

And COMICS UNLIMITED itself is back on a monthly schedule now; ≠35, April 30p, from Alan Austin,

has an appreciation of Neal Adams by Dave Jackson, plus a 10-page strip by Barry Clements and Greg Chown that mixes the strong barbarian hero, the king, his daughter, the wicked wizard, and so on in an unusual way, and the regular features. The May issue, I gather, will include a report on Comics 101, plus a few surprises.

Doug Gifford promises THING ≠21 for early May, with a new 10-page Alan Hunter strip, the conclusion of Alan Vince's talk with Frank Hampson, and a Paul Rose strip; a month later, welcome if you will THING COMICS ADVERTISER, with a few reviews and a little news wrapped around a typically comprehensive Thing ad section. The address is Doug Gifford,

and Thing costs 25p by post -- if you buy Thing ≠21, TCA ≠1 will be sent along to you free of charge!

Allow me to advise you; make sure, by post or at a Mart, to get GLIMPSE ≠3 30p from Paul Hudson,

it's in theory an SF fanzine, just as TBS is a comics fanzine, but, like TBS, it transcends the boundaries, with comic strips, fiction, and articles of interest to both camps. Some nice stuff, here; why, it even has a double-spread of Comic Mart photographs, including of course the TBS heavy mob and Edwards & Emlock.

The enigmatic NEW CARTOON REVIEW 12p by post from Andrew Johnson,

has come up with an ish of interest to fans of US comics; ≠6 has an article by Rich Morrissey on "The Many Lives of the Spectre" that's quite as interesting as one would expect from one of the best current American fan writers, a review of "Warrior" by the editor that judges it carefully--and finds it wanting, a childish set of insults by Pete April and Nige Edwards, letters -- and a nice new title logo by Hunt Emerson. I do wish Andy would stop cutting up comics and using them as art, even the cover illo comes from Adventure ≠439, it seems sterile and uninventive when I think of the fan artists we have available. But Andy's breaking away from the "ordinary" types of newszine, adzine, and genzine that proliferate these days...good luck to him!

From Silver Thumb Studios, undismayed by my stand-in's failure to understand their first issue (well, only a little dismayed), comes THE 2ND GLEITZMAN COMIC-BOOK 15p,

--don't despair, fellas, I like your horned-helmet wearing, faceless student, from the cover word balloons of "I'm God. What's your excuse?" and "(No offence meant.)" onwards. But then, it's true that I find Captain Nuts quite entertaining too...

FANTASY TRADER ≠21 marks a change in Mike Cruden's publishing schedule, as FT goes down to quarterly publication. This time around, for 16½p from Mike

you get 16 Bem-size pages of news, capsule biographies of golden age stars (by the big C himself, illustrated very strikingly by Keith Bates, who also drew the cover, letters, and an interesting article by fandom's Magnus Magnusson on Mandrake--not to mention 5 pages of useful-looking ads. I like FT, a zine with personality -- even if it does have a typical Nige Edwards letter in it!

THE HEROINE ADDICT (send at least £2 to M. Lock,

indicating whether you want copies by sea mail (60p off your "balance") or by air (80p) and THAs and other Comics Heroines Fan Club publications will be sent direct from America) has reached ≠9, and it's a nice issue, with excellent articles on Zephyr (from the Living Mummy series), Fly Girl (from "The Adventures of the Fly" Archie/Radio/Mighty comic), the Bionic Woman, and Isis, and some nice art--at least, I think about 80% of it is top grade, but the US fan-art style does grow on one--if this was my first THA, I expect I'd only rate half of it as good. Strange; but true!

And COMIC PLUS ≠1 (20p from Al Matheson, 12 Langwell Crescent, Wick, Caithness, Scotland) is an above-average first issue. Reviews by Emlock? Of course!

-EMS

THE U.K. HEROINE ADDICT

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THE U.K. HEROINE ADDICT #1

1976

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--all cheques must be made payable to Martin Lock, the AHPA British Agent--this applies to the U.K. only, in the U.S.A. rates are as announced in the regular copies of THA.

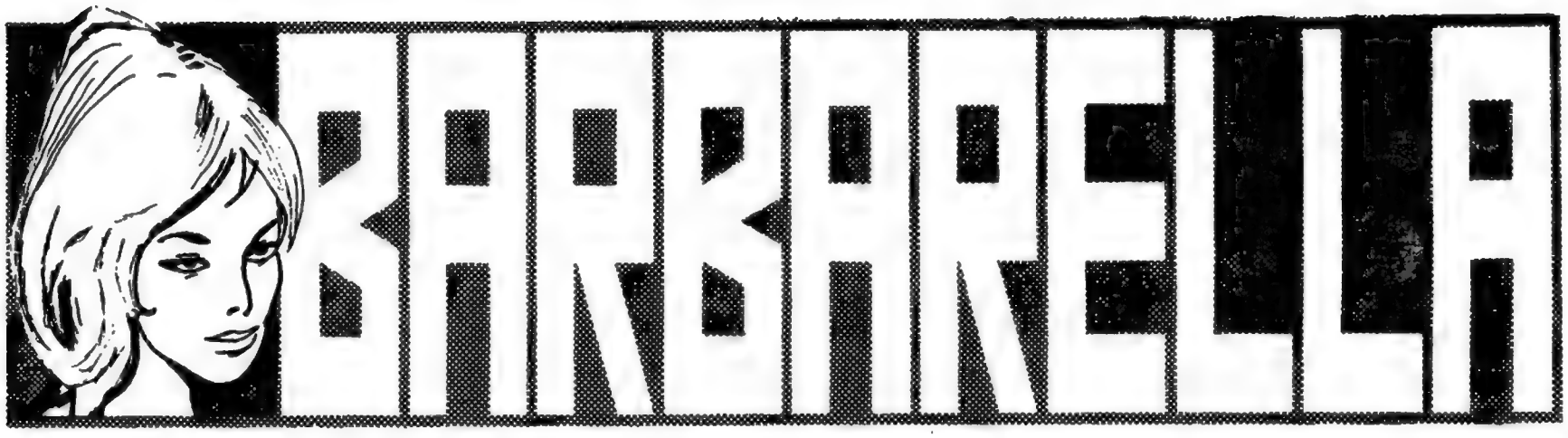
THE U.K. HEROINE ADDICT is published annually by the editor, Martin Lock,

vol. 1 no.1, 1976. Distributed in the U.S.A. by The Adventure Heroines Publishing Association, the production division of The Comics Heroines Fan Club, and in the U.K. by Martin Lock, normally as part of BEMUSING MAGAZINE #9; May 1976, at 20p a copy (double issue). Copyright (c) 1976 by Martin Lock; no part of any issue of this magazine may be reprinted without written permission. Artwork includes original illustrations of characters copyrighted by National Periodical Publications Inc, the Marvel Comics Group, and Charlton Publications--reproductions of comic-book covers and other similar art are for purposes of review, and are copyrighted by their publishers. This is an amateur, non profit-making magazine; letters and contributions should be sent either to Martin Lock or A.H.P.A., U.S.A. If work is to be returned, please enclose a suitably large s.a.e.

If Bemusing Magazine's editorial rejoices in the name of "Bemusings", ought this one to be called "THAughts"?

Well, I hope this 16-page section, designed for and written, drawn and edited by both U.K. and U.S.A. fans, is interesting for everybody. In Britain, it's the second section of a double issue of Bemusing, while in America it's being sent out to all C.H.F.C. (Comics Heroines Fan Club) members. Bemusing regulars involved are Leslie Stannage, Ruan Lanihorne, Bill W. Ryan, Rich Morrissey, Superswipe, Mercy Van Vlack, Jonn Hay, and Howard Stangroom, while almost all the C.H.F.C. department editors (including Mercy!) have joined in, too. My thanks to all the contributors to this special collaboration, and especially to Steve Johnson for collecting and forwarding the American material -- and Al Tanner of course, for giving the go-ahead and generally helping and over-seeing "THA/UK", as this publication has been code-named.

The mixture of articles, features & artwork found herein will need no introduction for our American readers; to "Bem" readers, may I say that, in our selection of short articles, you will find covered an assortment of present and past, dynamic and passive, heroines. Should you become captivated by these fascinating females, please read the "Membership and Subscriptions" paragraph to the left, or check out a special offer outlined on page 13. Due to the current state of the pound sterling, and the higher printing costs in America, CHFC fanzines aren't cheap, unfortunately, by British standards. But they are...addictive?



by Martin Lock

The Barbarella film, starring Jane Fonda, is based, rather loosely, on a comic book by Jean-Claude Forest. The story was serialised first in a French magazine, Le Terrain Vague, in 1964; it was issued as an English-language hardback in 1966, and in paperback in 1968, the year the film was made.

In eight chapters of 8 or 10 pages each, we follow our heroine through many adventures. A spaceship crashes on the planet Lythion, into a greenhouse run by Dianthus, and the pilot, Barbarella, stumbles out. Saved in the nick of time from wildly slashing rose bushes ("It's really too poetic a death!" she comments -- a remark used in the film for a different peril) by Dianthus, she finds that Lythion is divided into two factions -- the civilised greenhouse-dwellers, and a race of savages who live out in the desert. Barbarella volunteers to try to reconcile them--and, two pages later is half-naked and being stoned to death! Her rescuer receives the customary reward, and, she finds, is the man she was told to contact. Returning to the greenhouse city with a drug to use on the faction opposed to reconciliation, she finds that Dianthus has been discovered--but, using weapons from her spacecraft, victory is soon theirs, and Barbarella is soon hitching a lift from a passing space captain.

Well, that's the first ten-page chapter. In chapter four, some of the elements that Terry Southern used for the screen-play come in--the twin princesses, Stomoxys and Glossina, who capture Barbarella and set flesh-eating dolls on her in a wrecked spaceship, and then the underground journey ending up, in the fifth chapter, in the labyrinth of the city of Sogo. Durand (Professor Ping in the film) meets her, and introduces her to Pygar, the blinded last of the ornithanthropes, who soon flies her to the city. She meets the slinky one-eyed wench --who is, we find shortly, the queen of Sogo. The cage of carnivorous birds...the excessive machine...the queen's room of dreams...the end of the city...and Pygar flies Barbarella and the queen to safety.

continued...

Barbarella's adventures on the screen are a good deal different, inside this basic plot, bringing in Dildano the revolutionary leader, and the Concierge to the Great Tyrant--they do have equivalents in Forest's original tale, but not of the same importance. Of course more can be fitted into a ninety-minute film than into forty pages of comics, so the main story becomes more elaborate. No longer is Barbarella a wanderer, thrown by fate from encounter to encounter...now she's a girl with a mission!

Sent by the President of Earth to investigate the disappearance of a young scientist who has invented a dangerous weapon, Barbarella crash-lands on planet 16 in the system Tau Ceti. She is quickly captured by Stomoxys and Glossina, young girls we find later are nieces of the great tyrant, and taken to a wrecked space-ship to be set upon by flesh-eating dolls. In the nick of time, however, the nieces and friends are netted by Mark Hand, the catchman, who sets our heroine free and attempts to repair her space-craft after claiming his reward, a quaint old custom long replaced on Earth by, would you believe, holding hands? However, since the repairs are done in reverse, her ship crashes into the ground, boring into the planet and coming out in the labyrinth of the city of Sogo -- the place any inhabitants of the city who show any goodness or decency are exiled to. She meets Pygar, the blinded angel, and Professor Ping, who volunteers to repair her ship properly; after an encounter with the tyrant's Black Guards, and reviving Pygar's will to fly, she is flown (by Pygar) to Sogo itself. She and Pygar soon get separated... a little one-eyed girl kills two men who attacked her, and makes advances to her, but she escapes, and finds Pygar once more. Just as they are about to be fed to the Matmos, a strange form of liquid life that thrives on the city's evil thoughts and deeds, the Concierge to the Great Tyrant intervenes, and leads Barbarella to the great tyrant--who is revealed as the one-eyed wench! After an unsuccessful attempt to take control, Barbarella is thrown into a cage full of carnivorous birds. Before any permanent damage can be done, though, a trap-door opens, and she falls through, down a chute to the headquarters of the resistance movement. Dildano, who is its leader, is there; after a demonstration of the "hand-holding" method of love-making, he gives her the key to the Black Queen's chamber of dreams, and she sets off to capture her and find out about that young scientist (remember him? Durand Durand, creator of the positronic ray, no less).

However, on the way there our heroine falls into the clutches of the Concierge once more, and is put into "the excess machine", a kind of keyboard instrument that can kill a girl--kill her with pleasure! However, Barbarella out-lasts, overloads and destroys the machine, and, discovering that the middle-aged Concierge is actually Durand Durand, as affected and aged by the Matmos, tells him she has the key to the Black Queen's chamber of dreams. She takes him there, unlocks the door--and he pushes her in, grabbing both her key and the queen's, and, having trapped both Barbarella and the Black Queen, hurries off to take control of Sogo.

However, aided by weapons from Barbarella's spaceship, the people from the labyrinth have joined forces with Dildano's men and begun an attack on Sogo. As Barbarella and the Black Queen watch helplessly, Durand Durand unleashes the power of the positronic ray on them...and the queen decides to do the only thing she can do, set the Matmos free...

It is the end, the apocalypse, as the waters of the Matmos surge through the doomed, evil city. Durand Durand, still firing his useless positronic ray, is raving mad as all his plans fall apart, and the city collapses. The queen's bed, however, floats unharmed, as the Matmos has put a shield around it to protect itself from Barbarella's innocence, and at last both women are washed onto an island, where they find Pygar too, whom the Matmos had also found indigestible. The only escape is to fly, so Pygar carries them away...

"Pygar, what are you saving her for, after all the horrible things she's done to you?" asks Barbarella from under one of his arms.

"An angel has no memory."

And so ends "Roger Vadim's colourful comic strip extravaganza", as Britain's Radio Times once billed it, commenting on another page "all healthy chauvinist pigs will love it". Anita Pallenberg played the petulant, perverse but always attractive Black Queen, be she one-eyed wench or Great Tyrant; John Phillip Law played the blind angel Pygar competently, while Milo O'Shea gave a suitably colourful performance as the renegade scientist, Concierge, and all-round power maniac Durand Durand, and David Hemmings, in really a cameo performance, makes Dildano an intriguing mixture of incompetent bungler and efficient leader. But it is Jane Fonda's picture, she makes the character of Barbarella her own through her professionalism and her personality, making this "five-star double-rated astronavigatrix" and sex symbol into a heroine, somebody who could easily keep the episodic tale together. While the original comic was based on Brigitte Bardot, there's no doubt that Ms Fonda was the right actress for the film--there was talk of a sequel, but when Jane Fonda refused to be in it, the plans were very sensibly shelved.

-ML

I AM SPEAKING TO YOU TELEPATHICALLY, MIND TO MIND, TO INTRODUCE THIS Spotlight on: IMRA ARDEEN, MYSELF. SOME PEOPLE CALL ME... **SATURN GIRL!**

FIRST APPEARED IN ADVENTURE COMICS #247, WITH THE LEGION of SUPER-HEROES, AND BECAME LEADER TWICE.

THIS 30th CENTURY LADY HAS THE ABILITY TO READ MINDS, PROJECT HER THOUGHTS, AND SEND TELEPATHIC COMMANDS. SHE COMES FROM TITAN, ONE of SATURN'S MOONS, WHERE THEY ALL HAVE SIMILAR TALENTS. SHE'S HELPED SUPERMAN (ISSUES #165, 272) AND STARRED WITH THE LEGIONNAIRES IN ACTION, ADVENTURE, JIMMY OLSEN, SUPERBOY, AND WORLD'S FINEST COMICS. SHE SPEARHEADED THE LEGION'S NEW LOOK, IN SUPERBOY #184 WITH THE COSTUME ON YOUR RIGHT. SCIENTIST, MENTAL MASTER, LEGION LEADER, DESTINED TO BECOME THE WIFE of FELLOW CHARTER MEMBER LEGIONNAIRE, LIGHTNING LAD. HER COOL HEAD AND IRON WILL HAS PULLED THE LSH OUT of MANY A SUPER-SCRAPE. FOR MORE INFO, SEE The Amazing World of DC Comics #9, by Neal Pozner.

SATURN QUEEN, ANOTHER NATIVE of TITAN, FIRST APPEARED IN SUPERMAN #147, WITH the LEGION of SUPER-VILLAINS AGAIN THE SUPER-HERO LEGION. ALSO FOUGHT SATURN GIRL AND HER TEAMMATES IN ADVENTURE 331, 355, AND SUPERBOY #147.
★ SUPER-HYPNOTIST ★

ANY HEROINE OR VILLAINESS YOU'D LIKE TOKNOW MORE OF? DROP A NOTE TO Mercy Van Vlack %o THIS MAGAZINE, AND I'LL "SPOT LIGHT" YOUR FAV FIGHTING FEMME! OR SEND ME A "HERSTORY" FOR FUTURE COLUMNS!

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THE HEROINE PARADE

The assignment, to heroine addicts in Britain & America, was "Nominate for THA's new British Edition your favourite comics heroine!" And the next few pages show the response we got...

STORM
chosen by
Bob Rodi

Storm is, in all probability, the most powerful woman in comics. Her control of the elements has only been touched on, and yet she has shown control of not only the earthly elements, but those of space. Her limits are unknown, perhaps nonexistent... she herself is unsure of the extent of her powers. After all, they are overwhelming, cosmic...and Ororo is not. She is sensual, and bewitching in a way that only one so close to nature can be. And yet, unlike nature, she is rational and calm, almost supernaturally so. She is intriguing... compelling ...and fascinating.

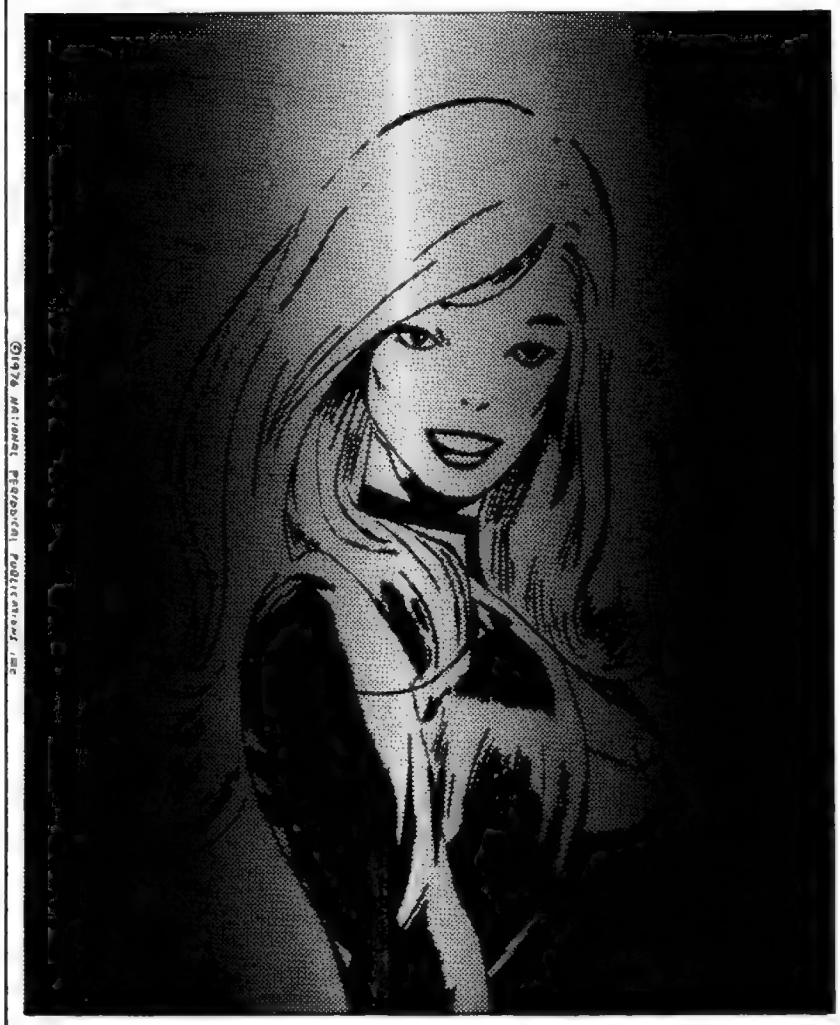
ROSE & THE THORN
chosen by
Scott Gibson

The Thorn remains an enigmatic and a refreshing character, even now, five years after her last appearance. Like many heroes and heroines, she was born out of a tragedy and a solemn oath of vengeance. When Rose Forrest's detective father was murdered by a criminal syndicate, The Thorn was born, vowing to destroy every member of the crime cartel before she would rest. Unlike most heroes and heroines, Rose is totally unaware that she is a heroine. The Thorn is a violent and stubborn outlet of Rose's personality, who emerges only when Rose herself is asleep. As The Thorn's career began to develop, the two personalities within the single mind began struggling for dominion, making the green-garbed crimefighter a heroine to the rest of the world, but something of a menace to Rose herself. Just as the psychological warfare was reaching its peak, the series was dropped, thereby "nipping in the bud" so to speak, what might have become the most interesting problem a super-hero has ever encountered.

BATWOMAN
chosen by
Dwayne Best

It's rather difficult to name your favourite heroine on the spur of the moment, as I was forced to do in writing this, so I chose one of my many favourites, the brightly-clad Batwoman. Kathy Kane, a former circus star, first donned the yellow-and-red costume in DETECTIVE #233, in her desire to imitate the Batman, her favourite hero. It is at this point that male chauvinism in its highest form entered her life. After he'd figured out her secret identity, Batman forced her to retire, saying that crime-fighting was no job for a woman, and if he had figured out her identity, others could, too. Needless to say, his logic was somewhat faulty, but after a brief reappearance in BATMAN #105, she "retired" again, and it was not until after WORLD'S FINEST #90 that she was allowed to stay in the business. Unfortunately, it was a short career, lasting only until 1964 and a total of 47 appearances, after which she vanished completely. The World's Greatest Detective didn't even bother to search for her.

continued...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THE BLACK CANARY
chosen by
Kathleen Glancy

As scripted by Elliot S! Maggin, I should specify. Some of her earlier writers had a tendency to make her moan on a bit about boring old -- er, poor old Larry Lance. She has quite credible combat abilities -- not so exaggerated that the girl in the street couldn't, with training, equal them--and her ultrasonic super-power is, most refreshingly, not over-used, not in fact used at all if it isn't really necessary. And her relationship with Green Arrow is a peculiarly believable one, far from the conventional "love interest". Finally, she has no need to go about proclaiming "I'm liberated" all the time -- because she really is.

THE BLACK WIDOW
chosen by
Bill W. Ryan

Unlike most of the current DC heroines, a number of the Marvel girls have led complex (and realistic) lives in the last dozen years. It was Tales of Suspense #52, April 1964, which introduced into the Iron Man strip "the breath-taking beauty of the mysterious Black Widow", and she's been around ever since, bringing romance and heart-break into the lives of such Marvel stalwarts as Hawkeye and Daredevil. A Russian spy, and then an agent of SHIELD; a slinky, veiled femme fatale, then a jump-suited adventuress; a heroine. And how well Gene Colan drew her in Amazing Adventures! Yes, an exciting girl -- my favourite.

BATGIRL
chosen by
Rich Morrissey

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Why am I selecting Batgirl as my favorite comics heroine? For one thing, because Martin told me to-- but also because of the incredible resiliency she's shown through the years. Her genesis was at best questionable-- written into the comic books at the request of the TV people, who wanted an answer to Emma Peel -- but Gardner Fox built her into a most unique, independent, and memorable heroine.

Frank Robbins treated her rather badly -- subordinating her more and more to Jason Bard, who eventually took her spot in DETECTIVE itself away from her--but ironically Elliot Maggin, not previously noted as very liberated in his treatment of women, came along and handled her properly in her new rôle as an Elizabeth Holtzman-parallel Congresswoman. He wrote her into Superman's stories entirely on his own, and she was rewarded with her own strip once more in BATMAN FAMILY. Although sometimes weak in plotting, Maggin's heart is in the right place--and I have high hopes for the Batgirl strip in his hands.

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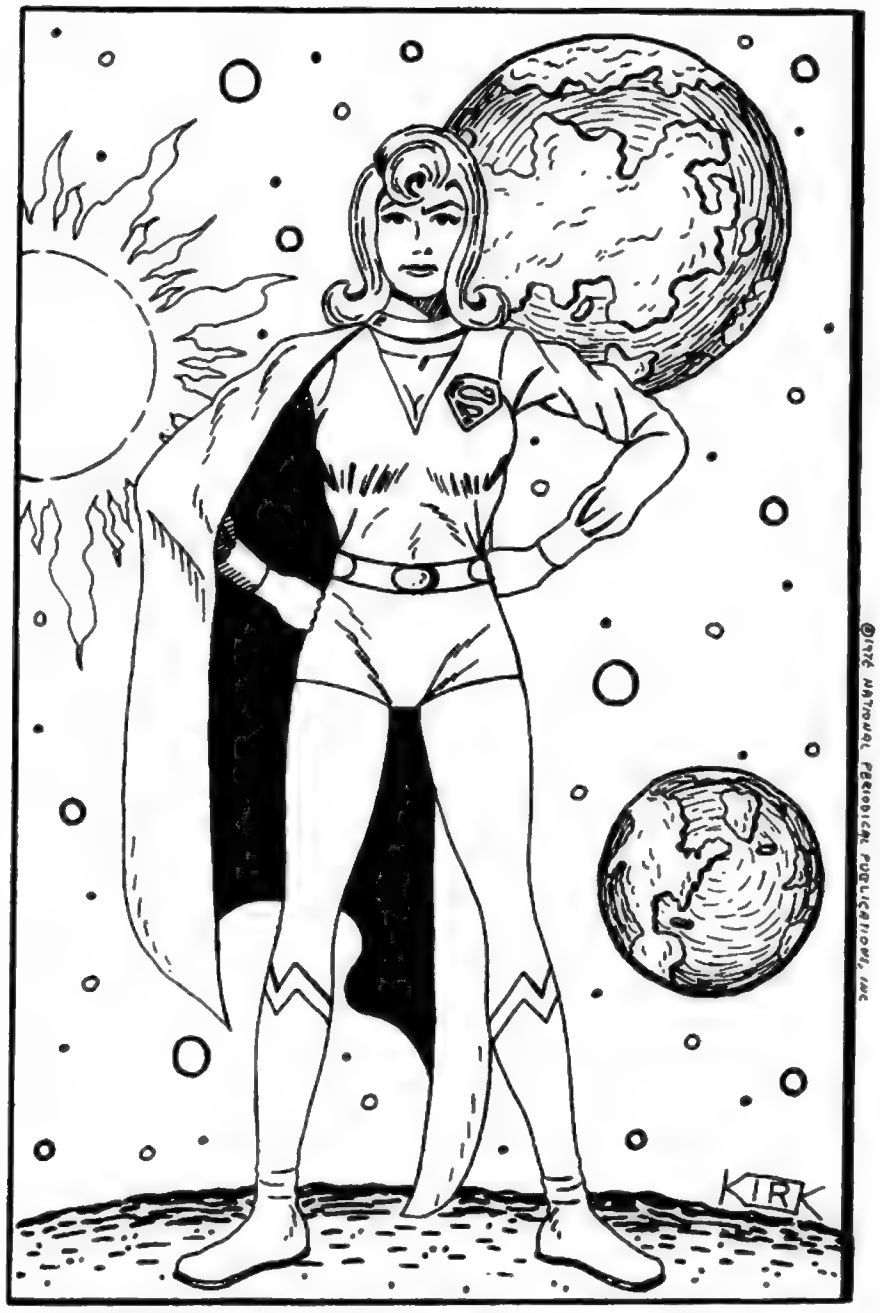
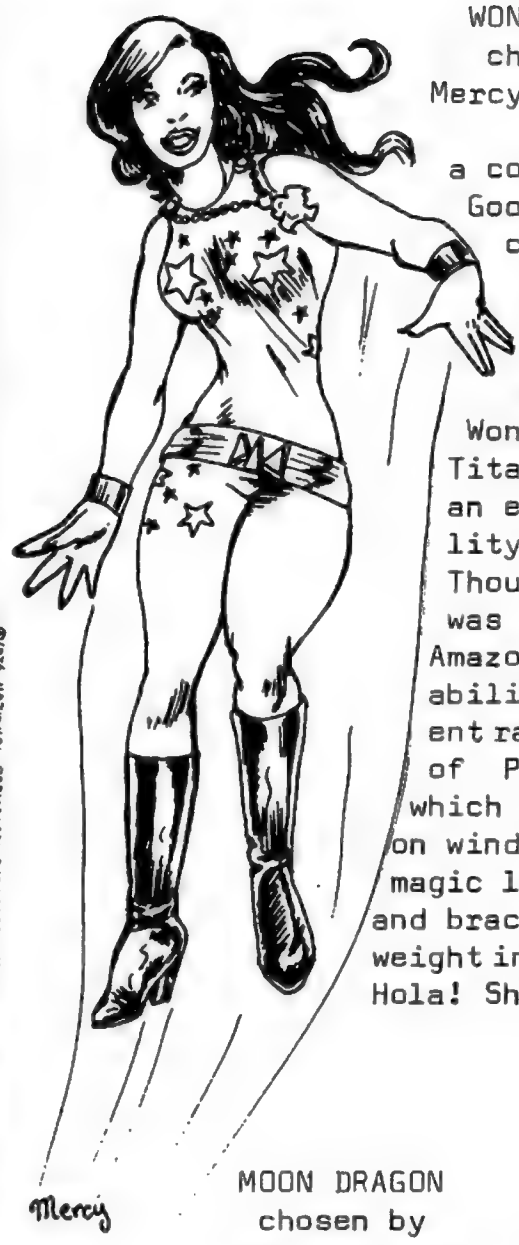


SUPERGIRL chosen by Kirk Hastings

I choose as my favourite comic magazine heroine Kara Zor-El, otherwise known as Supergirl. My reasons for my choice would be more difficult to explain, but I would probably number among them the fact that when I started reading comics (about the time that I started reading!) I immediately developed an affinity for Superman, having been an avid viewer of the Superman TV series. So naturally I would also feel somewhat "at home" with his female counterpart, Supergirl. Also, I feel, she is one of the more attractive heroines in comics today, and her personality has been better developed than most other current heroines--giving her a greater sensitivity to the plights of her fellow humans.

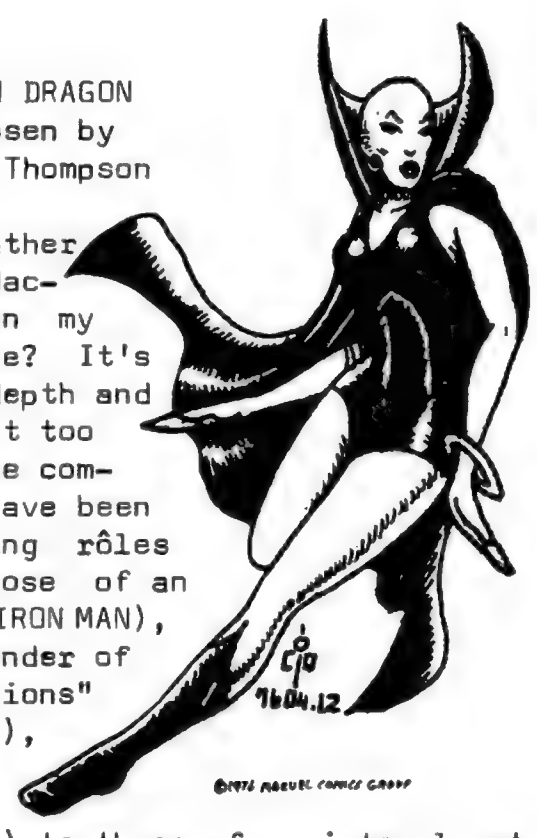
SHADOW LASS chosen by Jonn Hay

I like Tasmia Malor of Talok 8, that well-known shady lady -- but then, Mon-El is bigger than I am, so perhaps I'd better keep my feelings to myself...



WONDER GIRL chosen by Mercy Van Vlack

What do you search for in a comic book heroine? Good looks, a snazzy crime-busting suit, intelligence, and powers & abilities far beyond those of mortal men. Wonder Girl of the Teen Titans has it all, with an extra spice of equality and wit thrown in. Though an orphan, she was adopted by the Amazons and given the abilities of that ancient race through the use of Paula's Purple Ray, which enables "WG" to fly on wind currents, wield a magic lasso, play bullets and bracelets, and pull her weight in every titan task. Hola! She's faberoo!



MOON DRAGON chosen by Jeff Thompson

Why is Heather Douglas/Madame Mac-Evil/Moon Dragon my favourite heroine? It's because of her depth and flexibility. Not too many other single comics characters have been seen in enticing rôles ranging from those of an anti-hero(ine) (IRON MAN), an obsessed commander of her own "creations" (early DAREDEVIL), and a love-smitten woman (later DAREDEVIL) to those of an interplanetary warrior-adventuress (CAPTAIN MARVEL), a valuable team member (THE AVENGERS), and an able verbal sparring partner (and possible love interest?) for Thor (THE AVENGERS)! With a unique appearance, an imaginative origin, and a complex make-up, Moon Dragon can't lose! Until she marries Lex Luthor, she'll be my favourite heroine!

ONLY BEMUSING BRINGS YOU -- LATE, LAT

Marvel have cancelled a number of comics. These include MARVEL CHILLERS, ASTONISHING TALES, AMAZING ADVENTURES, STRANGE TALES, SKULL THE SLAYER, TOMB OF DARKNESS, MIGHTY MARVEL WESTERN, & CHAMBER OF CHILLS. Also, DR STRANGE is once more on a bi-monthly schedule.

HOWARD THE DUCK is now monthly. To give Gene Colan time to draw it, he is leaving DR STRANGE, which will now be pencilled by Craig Russell. Also moved up to a monthly schedule is CHAMPIONS.

A 100-page issue of UNKNOWN WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION, featuring new material, will be released this summer-- UWOSF will return as a regular black & white magazine if this sells well. One of the other axed b & w titles may be tried out again like this, as it was not doing badly when caught up in the wave of b & w cancellations, but this is only speculative at present.

Changes are due in the Marvel Weekly line-up soon, but we're sworn to keep quiet about them, especially a rather intriguing development...

The Neal Adams Conan story which was scheduled for SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN will not appear -- after he had missed the latest in a succession of deadlines, Marvel had to take it back, and send it to the Phillipines. This delay will, unfortunately, mean a reprint issue, of SSOC, not the firsttime that

...E NEWS STRAIGHT FROM AMERICA!

Mr Adams' inability to meet a deadline has caused this sort of trouble.

The July CONAN colour comic reprints an old b & w story by Jim Starlin.

DC's new black super-hero book is to be called BLACK LIGHTNING.

Thanks to Rob Barrow, just back from New York's Marvelcon, for most of the above information. He brought back, among other goodies, a Howard the Duck badge by Berni Wrightson...

After the three Marts this autumn & winter at the Regent Centre Hotel, it seems that the Comic Marts will be on the move again. There's a choice of venues, but a location in Chelsea, so Nick Landau tells us, is the best one --it will mean bigger Marts, with one or two added attractions, back on a bi-monthly schedule.

As Reg Uspatoff mentioned, Marvel are definitely putting their prices up into line with the other companies; in fact, in one or two regions of America as a "test market" they've been sold at 30c for a few months now. Before this, World Distributors in the UK had decided to put their 9p prices upto 10p; whether it will go up again to a massive 12p or not isn't certain yet-- but, with the pound so low, a proper rate for a 30c comic would be 16p!

And on that happy note, it's goodbye from Bem until August. -ML

ZATANNA
chosen by
Ted Delorme

My primary reason for choosing Zatanna is not what she's done, but what she <u>can</u> do. Anything! During her short stay in Joe Orlando's Adventure Comics, she faced demons enough for all the sorcery fans out there, but she performed equally well when Bob Kanigher and Cary Bates returned her to Earth. The art by such talented folks as Morrow, Giordano, Mortimer, and Calnan didn't bother me a bit, either! Once she was just a guest star, now she's gone; but, you know, for a while there, she was sheer...MAGIC!

THE SCARLET WITCH
chosen by
Diana Richmond

It was in March 1964, in the fourth issue of X-MEN, that the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants first appeared --and the Scarlet Witch debuted as a reluctant member of that group, along with her brother Quicksilver. Since then she's come a long way, shaking off the influence of Magneto and becoming one of the more regular members of the Avengers. Her powers have been refined and redefined in a most realistic way over the years --and she has even, like very few other heroines, fallen in love, and got married to a hero--The Vision no less.

She got her man--though I hear that there is still no little discussion over whether or not Vision is...er...fully operational? If not, I suppose that would explain his red face!

Powers, potential and personality this girl has -- all she needs now is a new costume!

NOVA KANE
chosen by
Ruan Lanihorne

It didn't take me long to decide my favourite of the gleaming galaxy of comics heroines; there are many that I like, but there's only one that I'm madly in love with --Ms Nova Kane. As Emlock commented in his review of E-Man ≠1 back in the first issue of Bemusing "you look at her, and you feel no pain, believe me". She's beautiful, she's a well-rounded personality, she's working her way through college as an exotic dancer...even after she gained E-powers in E-Man ≠8, she's still the same practical, magnificent gal. And what a costume that is! Who said one-piece bathing costumes were going out of fashion?

What a shame that Charlton backed out of the superhero field! If only they'd gone ahead with giving Nova a comic of her own, assuming Nick Cuti and Joe Staton had been the creative team, it would have been the best heroine comic ever. But then, looking at the other contributions to this feature, only one heroine in it ever had her own book...

THE ORIGINAL BATGIRL
chosen by Tom Luth

Hmm, my favourite heroine? Well, that is sort of a toss-up as I have several favourites, but probably ≠1 would have to be the original Batgirl. The preferance for this younger Batgirl is because I have always liked Bob Kane's Batman stories, as opposed to the "new look" Batman, and Batgirl, of course. Also, I've always gotten a kick out of seeing a kid like Batgirl, Robin, or the Legion of Super-Heroes tackle the world's problems. It allows us to fantasize we don't have to become adults and work, monotonously, within the system to arrive at solutions, but to dive into a problem with both fists swinging! I feel I can get into these non-super heroes so much more than someone like Superman or Green Lantern, who have unhuman powers, because they're just like us, but with masks and capes.

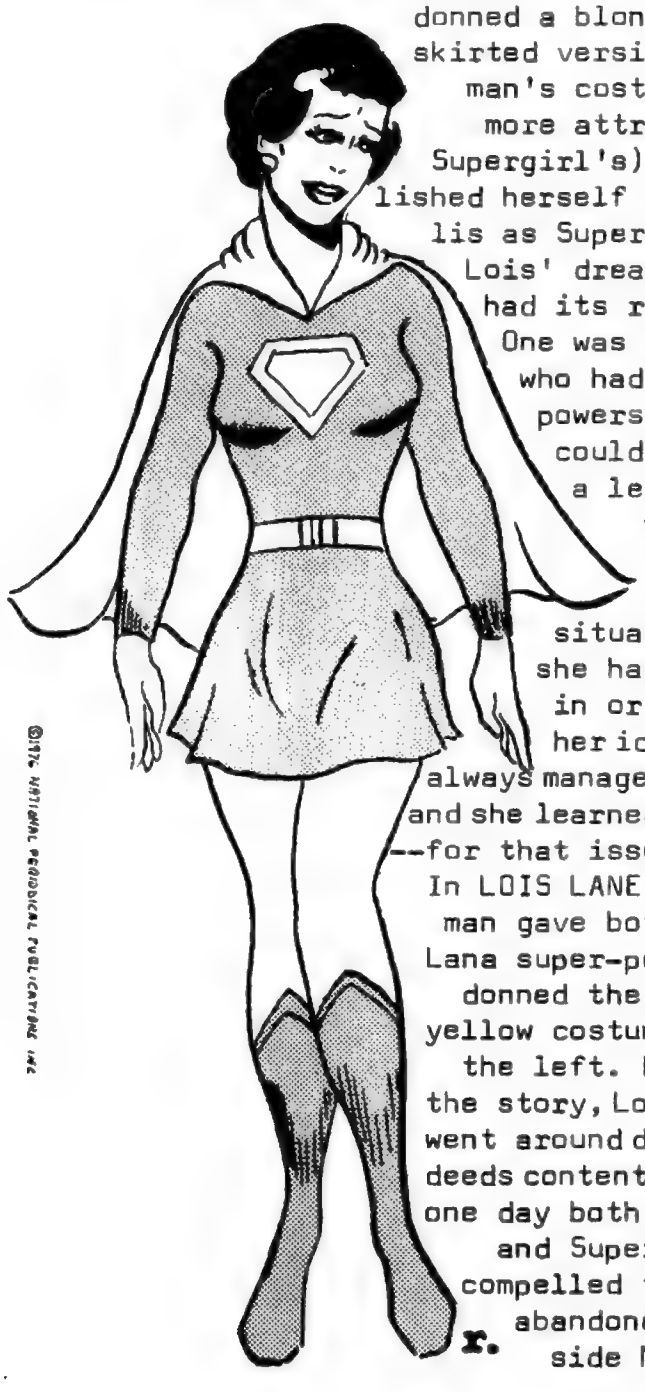
SUPER-LOIS!

BY BOB RODI

"But, Lois, darling, if I were to marry you, my enemies would take revenge on me by harming you." Ring a bell? It's the chorus of the saddest song in comics..."Lois Lane's Wedding Bell Blues."

Of course, it was most popular during the fifties, before women's growing awareness removed the social stigma from being an unmarried working girl. During those years, Lois did ever/thing possible to find a way around Superman's reasoning, and, more than once, this found her playing the rôle of super-heroine.

The first time she gained super-powers was in LOIS LANE ≠8, in a story called "Lois Lane ...Superwoman." Superman, sick of Lois trying to find out his secret identity, gave a gift to Lois...powers comparable to his own. Lois donned a blond wig and a skirted version of Superman's costume (though more attractive than Supergirl's) and established herself in Metropolis as Superwoman. But, Lois' dream-come-true had its rough spots. One was Clark Kent, who had given Lois powers just so he could teach her a lesson. Clark manipulated Lois into all sorts of situations where she had to squirm in order to save her identity. She always managed, however, and she learned her lesson --for that issue, anyway. In LOIS LANE ≠17, Superman gave both Lois AND Lana super-powers. Lois donned the green-and-yellow costume shown to the left. For most of the story, Lois and Lana went around doing super-deeds contentedly, until one day both Super-Lois and Super-Lana were compelled to go to an abandoned mill outside Metropolis.



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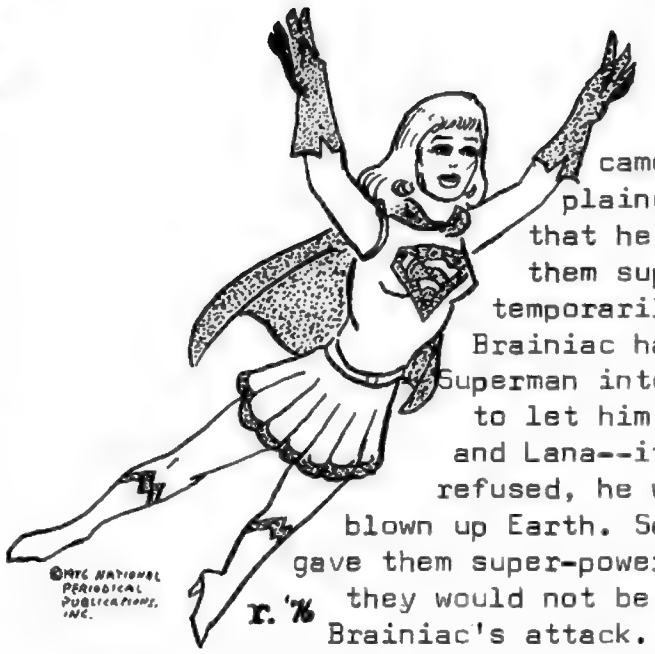

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When they arrived, the mill blew up. Superman came, and explained to them that he had given them super-powers temporarily because Brainiac had tricked Superman into agreeing to let him kill Lois and Lana--if Superman refused, he would have blown up Earth. So Superman gave them super-powers so that they would not be harmed by Brainiac's attack.

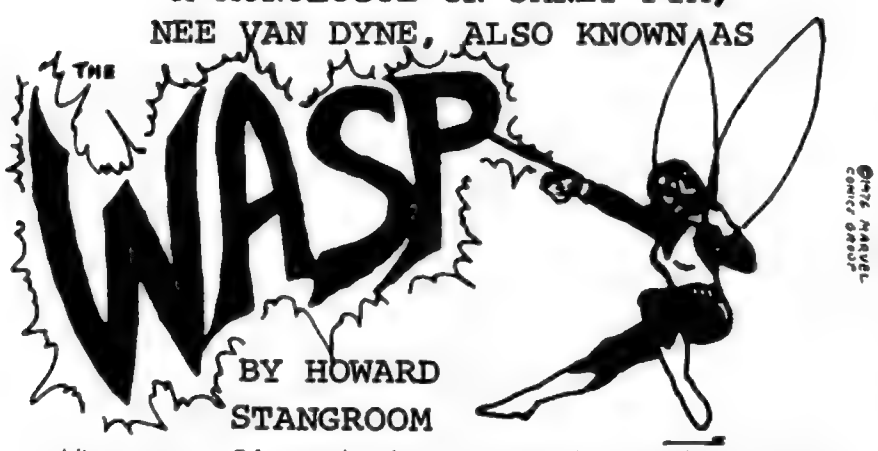
Later, Lois and Lana would again don these super-costumes, after bathing in a cavern stream which was said to give any bathers super-powers. After becoming super-women again, Lois and Lana spent the whole story fighting over who would marry Superman, each trying to impress him. However, their powers soon wore off, and they could not rejuvenate them because the cavern had earlier been destroyed.

The third time Lois would don her green-and-yellow costume was in ACTION ≠274. A Superman robot, masquerading as his master, gave Lois super-powers, and then pretended to lose his own. He then proposed to Lois, who handed him the same old"my-enemies-would-harm-you" line. Later, the robot's circuits began to fail, and as he died, Superman returned. The robot explained, to Lois' horror, how Lois was a hussy who only loved him for his powers. The robot died, but Superman didn't seem to care much and patched things up with Lois.

In LOIS LANE ≠87, Cor-Lar, a Kandorian criminal, gave Lois super-powers, and Lois donned a new super-costume. But Cor-Lar tricked Lois into super-heroining in Kandor. Lois was at a loss on how to get out, until Cor-Lar taunted her by flirting with Superman. An angry Lois got out and disposed of her enemy, and, as usual, her super-powers were gone by the end of the story.

Aside from her various Super-Lois incarnations, Lois has had other identities. Borrowing Jimmy Olsen and Lana Lang's secret identities, she became Elastic Lass and Insect Queen, but neither was powerful enough, or ATTRACTIVE enough, for Superman's wife. Now, in the '70's, it is a safe bet that when and if Superman marries Lois, she'll have no powers. But who knows? Lois already has a wardrobe of three super-costumes, so maybe one day she'll get the powers to match them.

A MONOLOGUE ON JANET PYM, NEE VAN DYNE, ALSO KNOWN AS



Whenever I'm asked who my favourite comics character is, and I tell them "The Wasp", their reaction is usually one of two things, either (a) "Who? Oh her! Be serious, for heaven's sake." or (b) hysterical laughter, and then "Very good, Howard. Now seriously, who is your favourite comics character?"

Well, I <u>am</u> being serious; my main reason for reading comic books in my youth (circa 1965-6; I was advanced for my age) was that kids in my circle seemed to regard them as the next best thing to Playboy, and they spent hours in the playground at Infant's School (yes, it was that long ago) leering at the ladies in kinky boots, tights, etc. Thus, my initial impulse towards comics was curiosity; and while I didn't find many of the comic heroines any more captivating than my companions did, I did become enamoured with the Wasp. She had a sharp wit, and was verbally the equal of her male compadres; she had fantastic courage (it's easy to face hordes of evil-doers when you've got Amazon strength, Amazonium bracelets and tiara, a magic lasso, and are pretty near invulnerable anyway -- but when you're only able to shrink to two inches in height and fly about a bit, it's a different matter); she was independently wealthy; and her apparent flightiness was balanced by a deep maturity--despite her sometimes almost juvenile attitude, I got the feeling that she took, for instance, being an Avenger as seriously as Thor or Iron Man did. And she was light-years away from Sue Storm, Marvel Girl, and all the other tear-shedding, coffee-making, weak-kneed "token female" ilk.

She was the weakest Avenger, in terms of physical power, ever; yet to me this makes her struggles on their behalf seem all the greater. Mostly she specialised in stop-gap measures, and running interference, giving the boys a chance to take a breather -- for example, her "blinding" of the Sub-Mariner and the Melter, in Avengers ≠4 & 6 respectively, her struggle inside the Hulk's ear in FF ≠26, and the job she had done in tracking him, and her small, but crucial, rôle in the defeat of both Hulk and the Lava Men in Avengers ≠5, amongst many others.

And in between whiles, she was coming on like Gangbusters in Tales to Astonish, frequently rescuing her prissy and one-dimensional boy-friend/husband, Hank "Master-Of-Many-Clichés" Pym, most notably from the malevolent Madame Macabre in Astonish ≠66.

When she eventually married him, in Avengers ≠60, I was thoroughly disgusted. In fact, my only happy memory of that issue is the scene in which Jan, resplendent in white bridal lace, delivers a terrific right hook to Princess Python's jaw as partial retribution for the Circus of Crime having gatecrashed her wedding --simply beautiful in its iconoclastic impact.

My disgust proved to be justified; Hank's wet-blanket attitudes dampened the lady's personality considerably in later Avengers issues. Oh, there were a few nice moments, such as her confrontation in Avengers ≠74 with the bogus Black Panther, and her old fire returned almost completely in Avengers ≠83, <u>with</u> the Lady Liberators and <u>sans</u> Henry. But the Wasp had lost her sting -- she was never quite the same, even in the revamped Ant-Man strip of three years ago.

She (along with her klutz of a husband) has since appeared only fleetingly -- the cosmic occurences in Captain Marvel managed to over-shadow even her personality.

So, what does the future hold now for the first of Marvel's heroines to break the token female barrier? The Scarlet Witch, the Invisible Girl, and Marvel Girl have all changed with the times -- should the Wasp be denied this chance?

--No. On behalf of the most sadly misused heroine in Comicdom, I wish to petition the Marvel editors for a divorce!

Or then again, I've always thought Jan would look kind of nice in black... -HS

Golden Age Girls

costume: Ebony black, with brown boots

FEATURING: The Black Angel
IN: "The Bells of Notre Dame" - 8 pages
FROM: Air Fighters Vol.1 No.11 - August 1943

"The Bells of Notre Dame must ring again!"

Throughout the beseiged city of Paris is whispered the legend that Quasimodo the hunchback of Notre Dame, will return to ring his famous bells to signal a mass revolt against the hated Nazi oppressors. And the Black Angel is given the order to make the legend come true!

Departing from the Office of British Intelligence, the Black Angel, "The Greatest Flyer in England", and the Black Prince, "Ace of the R.A.F.", make their way to occupied France and meet with the French underground.

As the word spreads of her mission, the Avenging Aviatrix is soon leading hundreds of people towards Notre Dame. But, at the very portal of the cathedral "an odd sight brings the mob to a halt." A hunchback sitting on the parapets! Quasimodo!?

"Halt!" pronounces the figure. "Let no one come further. The Bells are the sacred task of Quasimodo. Go back to your homes."

The stunned crowd quickly disperses, despite the Black Angel's pleas to remain and watch Quasimodo ring the bells.

Time passes, and the bells do not ring. Alone, the Black Angel and the Black Prince charge the Cathedral, only to be subdued by Nazi soldiers who had set up the hunchback Malvino as their "Quasimodo" stooge.

Securely tied back to back to the clapper of one bell, the Black Prince tries to offer a few tender words to the Black Angel before the Nazi officer carries out his threat to use their bodies as human mutes to quiet the bells of freedom.

But in the dark belfry that once knew Quasimodo, the mis-shapen Malvino watches. "Ah... she is so beautiful. Quasimodo loved Esmeralda. Now Malvino has princess. Malvino save... Me not let princess die..."

"Shot after shot tear into the hunchback's body...but he pursues his purpose", overcoming the Nazi officer, freeing the two victims, and with his last ounce of energy he begins to toll the bells.

In the streets, the aroused French people respond to the bells with shouts of "Arise, Men of France! It's Freedom's Song!" and "Death to all Nazis!"

With the round of bells and voices, and the spirit of the hunchback permeating the air, the Black Prince tries again to share some of his feelings with the Black Angel, but again she gently turns him aside. And soon they are winging their way to England, with the message "Long Live France" silhouetted in the evening sky over Paris. The words remain unspoken, but perhaps the meaning is understood.

As the "harmless sweet girl" Sylvia Manners, the Black Angel lived in Fleetwood Castle in England with her doting aunt, Lady Lawton. And beneath the castle, in a secret underground hanger, her ebony Hawker Hurricane pursuit plane was stored.

While the Black Angel is particularly remembered for her close fitting costume, the story and art prove her to be second to no heroine. She is athletic, modest and sensitive, but still a commanding figure -- in any situation

continued...

she is in complete control of herself and those around her.

The art in this story by John Cassone is excellent, though fans will spot his "borrowing" from Crandall's Blackhawk as a model for the Black Prince. Well drawn figures with careful consideration for expression, and excellent backgrounds denote his work.

With romance held aside, action at a maximum, and an eerie mixing of present and past, this is the finest of the 20 Black Angel stories. The price of $12.50 to $25.00 for this book is high, but not outrageous for a Golden Age comic.

Available to heroine fans is the black and white Comic Reprint of Air Fighters vol. 1 #2 which includes the introduction and first appearance of the Black Angel (available from Bud Plant or Comic Reprints for $2.00). Obviously the book was not reprinted for the Black Angel story alone, but it is a classic issue to have in your collection. The story is good, though the art is crude and unflattering.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

"Death on wings, and wrapped in dazzling beauty", the Black Angel flew her way through World War II in the pages of:

Air Fighters vol. 1 #2-12; vol. 2 #1-8, 10
(March 1942 - Fall 1945)

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Steven R Johnson, 16385 Two Bar Road, Boulder Creek, CA 95006, U.S.A.

SPECIAL OFFER — FANZINES

For UK readers, a special introductory offer to The Heroine Addict. Just send 50p (cheque, postal order, or a 50p stamp), and we'll send off a copy of the current issue of THA, which has a wrap-around Mercy cover, and lots of features and articles (see page 12 of Bem's first section). Send your money to Martin Lock at 33, Chester Road, NORTHWOOD, Middx HA6 1BG. It's in stock now, and will be sent off to you right away--or, if we sell out, the next issue will be sent off to you as soon as it arrives, which will probably be late July.

For USA readers, how about trying BEMUSING MAGAZINE, a regular British magazine in this format with articles, news and features? For five issues sent by sea, starting with the 24-page #9, just send $1.50 to the CHFC address, payable to A.S. Turner, and we'll arrange it!

ART CREDITS:
Ted Delorme: 8 (Moon Dragon), 9 (Zatanna)
Dave Edge: 13
Kirk Hastings: 8 (Supergirl)
Larry Heller: 12
Tom Luth: 9 (Batgirl)
Trevor Phoenix: 2
Bob Rodi: 6 (Storm), 10 (Lois Lane)
Leslie Stannage: 7 (The Black Widow), 9 (Nova Kane & Scarlet Witch)
Carol Strickland: 11
Superswipe: 1, 3, 6 (Batwoman), 7 (Black Canary), 14 (the Red Guardian), 15, 16 (Modesty Blaise)
Scott Taylor: 6 (The Thorn)
Mercy Van Vlack: 5, 7 (Batgirl II), 8 (Wonder Girl & Shadow Lass), 16 (Bug!).

The cover reproduced at the top of this column is of the first issue of STARFIRE, a new heroine title edited by Joe Orlando, scripted by David Michelinie (although Elliot Maggin is soon due to take over from him), and drawn by penciller Mike Vosburg and inker Bob Smith -- though the cover, of course, is by Ernie Chua. "A World Made of War" is the title, and it apparently mixes sword-wielding barbarians with super-science. Sounds promising... And the second cover's for the latest Wonder Woman issue--we have to mention her somewhere, yes? After all, she is "Super-Heroine Number One". Strange she wasn't nominated for The Heroine Parade! -ML

"COLOR HER... THE RED GUARDIAN!"

MARVEL'S NEWEST HEROINE

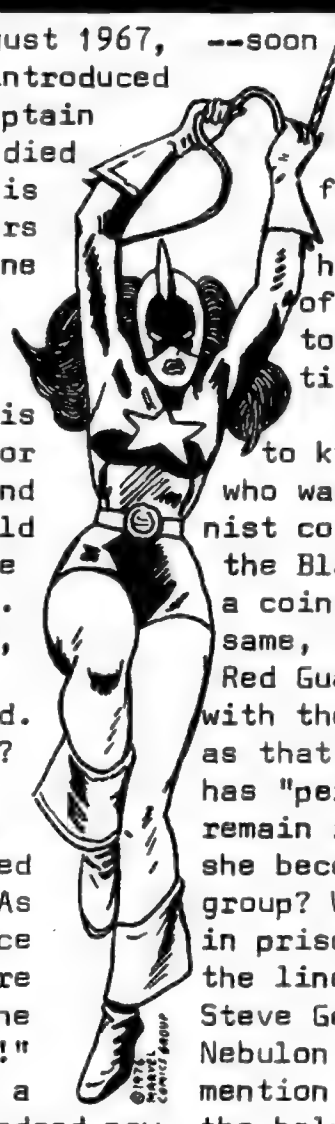
a short article BY Martin Lock

It was in Avengers #43, back in August 1967, that the original Red Guardian was introduced to us, as a communist answer to Captain America; in the following issue, he died a hero's death. But it seems that his name did not die, as almost nine years later, in one of the switches of scene that Steve Gerber delights in, a new bearer of that name is found swinging to the rescue of a hold-up victim in a snowy city somewhere in Russia. This is obviously just a routine patrol for her, she goes into action smoothly and professionally; within seconds the old knife-wielding "mugger" is out of the running. And then the police arrive...

"It's she -- we've found her! Halt, you! Halt!"

The girl she has rescued is amazed. "Comrade--wait! Why do you take flight? You've done no wrong!"

But she's already running for dear life, and her voice drifts back, mixed with the sound of police gunfire -- "As you see, sister--my guilt or innocence is a matter of controversy. There are those in Russia who disapprove of the very existence of -- the Red Guardian!"



An intriguing start, I feel -- it's a welcome change to discover a fully-fledged new heroine. She has, it seems, no special powers beyond fighting skills and agility--she wishes to contribute more to the world than just the work she does as Dr Tania Belinsky. The Russian authorities may not like having a costumed vigilante stopping crime they'd rather ignore, but, she muses, "my concept of what my life can be embraces more than the niche the Party has made for me".

But we soon find out why Steve Gerber chose to start Defenders #35 in beautiful down-town Russia, as Dr Strange puts through a telephone call to Dr Tania, and by pulling a few dozen diplomatic strings enables her to come to the USA to perform an operation only she can do-- the replacing of Kyle Richmond's brain in his head. As his house-guest in the following issue it isn't long before she discovers that there is more to Stephen Strange than meets the eye --soon she is following him, and, despite putting up a good fight, is like him captured by the nefarious Plant-Man!

Well, popular opinion had been calling for Steve Gerber to create a new heroine for the Defenders, and that's what he has done -- to use the name of a "heavy" of the mid-sixties is a typical Gerber touch, and should make for some interesting developments.

Such as? Well, how did Ms Belinsky get to know about the original Red Guardian, who was a military secret in an asian communist country, though a Russian by birth (and the Black Widow's husband)? It can't just be a coincidence in names, as the costume is the same, if better filled. And what was the new Red Guardian's origin? She looks set to stay with the Defenders for a few issues at least, as that well-known master of the mystic arts has "persuaded" her escorts that she should remain in the United States for a time...will she become a member of that illustrious non-group? With the Valkyrie out of action (she's in prison), they certainly need a heroine in the line-up--in fact, with the many plots that Steve Gerber's got going, from Headsmen to Nebulon to the Eel and the Porcupine, not to mention a certain homicidal elf, they need all the help they can get!

It would certainly be pleasant if she does become a full-time Defender -- the only other candidate would be the villainess from the Headsmen, the orb-headed Ruby...after all, we all know this remarkable tendency that Marvel villainesses have to suddenly see the error of their ways, and reform! But the Red Guardian would give an international flavour to the most flexible super-team around, whereas a gal with a red glass globe as a head is just a bit too...unusual?

Anyway, don't miss the May and June issues of the Defenders, and see what you think of Russia's latest export, and Marvel's latest heroine. It's early days for Tania Belinsky as yet, but she seems to have the skills and the personality, the costume and the looks, of a successful heroine. Let's hope Steve Gerber keeps the spotlight on her!

READ MISTY FOR ME

BY RUAN LANIHORNE

Hardback novels in comic form are very rare -- and very seldom successful. Until the two recent books masterminded by Gil "Blackmark" Kane, the only such efforts of this decade by Americans were Burne Hogarth's adaptation of "Tarzan of the Apes", and James McQuade's book "Misty", billed quite accurately as "an adult fantasy in visuals". Both were published in 1972, and while the Tarzan book's success was assured by Hogarth's international following, plus the thousands of Burroughs enthusiasts in America and Europe, "Misty" was much more of a gamble... a gamble that didn't quite come off as well as its creators hoped, perhaps.

James McQuade, in 1969, was a commercial artist, drawing paperback covers, brochures, and advertisements; Gil Porter, his friend and Misty's co-creator and scripter, was an editor and copywriter. They, especially McQuade, had become interested in the type of graphic novel being published in Europe, and had also got into the world of fandom -- soon the idea of a book project began to form, and "Misty" was born. In 1972, the book was published.

Briefly, in 121 pages, we follow our heroine across a strange future world, as she tries to escape from the computer-ruler GODD, whose dictatorship is modelled loosely on religion. In a world of transplants and artificial limbs and organs she is perfect--this offends GODD. And then her lover refuses a computer-ordained marriage to another, for her sake. At once, a liquidation machine guns down the man, and an innocent girl it mistook for Misty--she is on the run! GODD's "very intimately personal secretary" Mary, a brunette who specialises in wearing small ammounts of black leather, and the Censorship and Death Legion's Headsensor Kleezie, an ugly and wrinkled fellow with a taste for (other people's) death, are hot on her tracks, as Misty is forced to fight for her life in an arena, escapes, is caught in an undersea city ruled by a decadent sea-queen, escapes, is captured by a fat, sadistic old pirate and taken to his castle, escapes...and in the end is the final confrontation with the dictator. "There is no ending", intones the computer's Voice of Prophecy on the last page.

What else? Well, there are nice men and not-so-nice men, plus two or three women, who all get to know Misty very, very well, sometimes in reality and occasionally in illusions. We find space-craft and 1918 warplanes, computers and viking ships, noble sacrifices, monsters, people perverse, foolish, content and empty. Misty carelessly keeps losing all her clothes, and few of the other girls fare much better. In short, there are a lot of clichés borrowed from SF involved, and almost as many taken

from "soft-core" pornography and underground comics. The drawing is painstaking, but not always well-proportioned; the writing relies too much on capture and escape, and adds too little to a basically hackneyed idea of a girl fleeing across a bizarre future world. "A deft combination of exciting drawing, adventure, scathing satire, warm sex, social comment and suspense", it calls itself on the back cover; I find a distinct lack of most of these six qualities. How about "A fairly competent mix of sometimes reasonable drawing, unconnected incidents, lightweight clichés, warmed-over sex, self-congratulation and sadism"? It may be an imitation Barbarella, but it's fairly readable -- try again sometime, James. -RL

HOW WE CAUGHT THE HEROINE BUG

by
Harlan Noriune

The Comics Heroines Fan Club's first fanzine appeared in September 1974; it was, of course, THE HEROINE ADDICT ≠1. As editor Albert Tanner pointed out then, the purpose was not to produce "just another comics fanzine"--instead, he and the other people involved from the start (including Scott Gibson, Mercy Van Vlack, Ted Delorme, Dwayne Best, and Scott Taylor) had something different in mind: the publication of the USA's only regularly issued fanzine devoted entirely to readers, writers and artists who are interested in comics heroines and their counterparts in other media.

Restrictive? Well, not really. "THA" may be limited to the heroines, but the other magazines both in America and the UK devote so little space to the fascinating females that the Comics Heroines Fan Club (or CHFC) has the field to itself. Can you remember any articles on heroines in fanzines you've read lately? The only one I can think of was in the June '75 issue of Fantasy Unlimited, a short appreciation of Lois Lane in Martin's own "Enter the Heroes" series!

Issue 2 of THA was a month late--which isn't unusual in fan publishing circles. However, what is unprecedented is that all subsequent issues have been on time! The current issue is now ≠9, and in addition to these regular THAs, two issues of a fiction magazine called "The Adventuress" have been published, a set of 4 "Fabulous Fems" 13¼" by 9¼" posters, and "The Heroine Addict's Art Portfolio". That's pretty good going by any standards.

How do they manage this? Well, a lot of fans are involved, now; besides Al Tanner, editor and publisher, there's an assistant editor, an art editor, and ten department editors who are all responsible for preparing a certain number of pages for an issue. They may write them, or draw them, or be sent somebody's article to illustrate, lay out and type--but this breadth of available talent out-classes other fanzines where "assistant" or "contributing" editor can mean almost anything -- or nothing. While many of them have other interests, from Teen Titans to Mission Impossible, the amount of between-issue communication, including a cassette tape chain and regular staff bulletins on the new projects and assignments, gives the CHFC first call on their loyalty.

Since THA ≠1, a lot of heroines, and quite a few villainesses, have been dealt with; Shanna the She-Devil, the Enchantress, Wonder Woman, Rima, Star Sapphire, Moondragon, Nightshade (the Charlton version), Nyoka, Emma Peel, the first Supergirl, Catwoman, Thundra, Valkyrie, Red Sonja, Marvel Girl, the current Supergirl, Polymer Polly (from Dell's "Superheroes"), the Cat, Dolphin, Aquagirl, Modesty Blaise, Mantis, Vampirella, the Bionic Woman, Zephyr, Poison Ivy, Golden Girl, Isis, and Fly Girl have all had articles devoted to them, and pieces with general titles like "The New Heroines", "Star Trek Heroines", "Escape From The Vault of Villainesses", "The Fantastic Femmes", "The Avengers Women", and "Robert Kanigher -- Maker and Breaker of Heroines" have covered a lot of ground, too, while an assortment of regular columns have covered more fighting females than we've any right to know about. If that's a plain, uninteresting list of meaningless names, you're in a bad way, fella--bring a few more young ladies into your life with THA! And how's that for an advertising slogan?

But THA and the other CHFC publications do, I feel, do a lot for fandom -- and their start towards international status is a fine sign of what can be done.

"At times", wrote Rich Morrissey in THA ≠2's lettercol, "I feel that the original spirit of fandom has been vanishing -- as a co-operative venture between fans... 'Zines like THA are really what fandom's all about!"

Once you've caught the "heroine bug", you're unlikely to find any cure--you're an addict!

If you enjoyed this special trans-atlantic collaboration, let either Al Tanner or Martin Lock know -- maybe we will arrange something similar for next summer, how would that be?

ROB BARROW PRESENTS

REGENT CENTRE HOTEL, Carburton St, London, W.1.

AUGUST 21st 22nd ADMISSION 70P

9TH ANNUAL BRITISH COMIC CONVENTION 1976

This year the convention will again be held at the Regent Centre Hotel where we will be using all three rooms of the Portland Suite, one room for films, talks and auctions, and the remaining two rooms will be converted to create one large dealers room holding nearly 100 dealers tables. We will be showing no less than nine full length feature films during the weekend, as well as a number of shorts. The admission price for this two day non-stop extravaganza is only 70p. Tickets will be on sale on the day or in advance from:

COMICON 76 (Tickets).
212 Grange Road,
Plaistow,
London, E.13 OHB.

All cheques and postal orders should be made payable to Fantsay Domain. Please enclose an S.A.E. (Tickets will not be available until June 1st).

DEALERS

Dealers tables are available at £6.00 each for both days including one free admission per table. All tables must be booked and paid for in advance, no tables will be available on the day. Payment, accompanied by an S.A.E., should be sent to COMICON 76 (Tables), address as above. All cheques and postal orders should be made payable to Fantasy Domain.

PROGRAMME

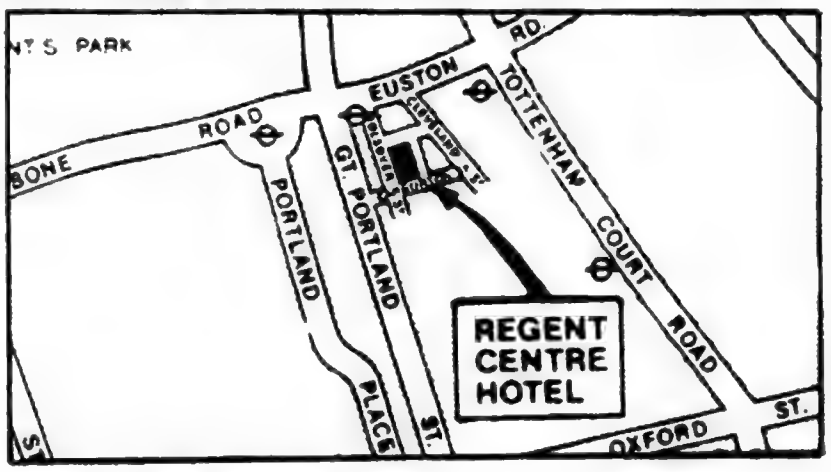
SATURDAY

Mid-day - 4.30 pm Dealers Mart.
2.30 pm - 4.00 pm Film Show.
5.00 pm - 5.45 pm Star Auction.
5.45 pm - 7.15 pm Denis Gifford Presents.
7.30 pm - 8.15 am All Nite Film Show.

SUNDAY

10.00am - 4.00 pm Dealers Mart.
1.00 pm - 2.30 pm Film Show.
3.30 pm - 4.30 pm Auction Special.
4.30 pm - 6.00 pm Fandom Forum.
6.00 pm - 9.15 pm Film Show.

All times and avents are subject to change.



HOW TO GET THERE:

Underground to Great Portland Street (Circle and Metropolitan).
Or Buses 3, 18, 27, 30, 53, 137, 176, to Great Portland Street Station.

REACTION

Send your letters to: Martin Lock

People,

Why I like Bem; it's fun to read! Yep, Bem is one of those rare things, a magazine which fully entertains. It leaves me happy, with a smile on my face, and a warm afterglow.

It also stimulates: censorship, yes or no? In comics, yes. I am against censorship in adult mediums but, since the market for colour comics is mostly juvenile, there should be a paternalistic body (the CCA) to watch over comics. Young children, after all, are all too easily corrupted.

If the CCA was to be disbanded, however, I don't think there would be a great upsurge in sex & violence, simply because previous experiences in the fifties should tell publishers that indulging in excesses will lead to a vicious clamp-down.

Has anyone else noticed that Marv Wolfman has thrown against Daredevil villains who have been pirated from other sources? Copperhead is named after a foe of the Batman's, and his origin is exactly the same as the story of The Cobra in "Die In The Name of The Law" by Marv Channing and Gray Morrow in Sorcery #8. Why, C'head even looks the same as the Cobra! The Torpedo was the second man of that name to tackle DD; Nick Fury tangled with a previous Bullseye in Shield #16; oh, and the "Stairway to the Stars" story reminded me of Adam Strange.

As a comics fan, I say junk Cap'n Nuts.

As a Peanuts fanatic (I own over three dozen Peanuts paperbacks!) I say keep him.

David A. Simpson.

Gosh, is Captain Nuts similar to this Peanuts strip you mention? I must investigate...(this answer given on lawyer's advice)

Dear Martin,

Bem-8 was fantastic. I especially liked the article on Conan by Hunter Tremayne; the drawings were great, the ones on page 4 were mucho hilarious.

What are the chances of a Comic Mart in Glasgow? London is rather a long way to travel for comics. Also, what good comic shops are there in Glasgow?

Alex Henry.

Can anyone help about Glaswegian comic shops? Rob Barrow's planning a series of Comic Marts in various cities soon--Birmingham starts the series in September, and Bristol, Newcastle, Hull, and Glasgow Marts are also planned.

Dear Martin,

I was a bit baffled by Captain Nuts until I saw from the editorial that three people compiled it, and by the look of it it had three different ideas going. Seriously though, it's a gas idea you have there, for us to collect the whole series and then rearrange the panels to make coherent gags!

Ray Aspden.

Dear Martin,

I'm slightly worried about the changes you are promising, or threatening. Personally, I definitely don't favour less news and longer articles -- with CMN coming slower and slower, and CU with very little news you now have less competition, and not everyone gets TCR. I also find the people who can write interesting articles are very few and far between, though I do favour larger (thicker?) future issues.

Alan R. Cookson.

And that's one heavily-cut letter -- would you believe it was originally seven large pages?

Dear Martin,

Mercy van Vlack's cover illo was very nice, but some of the inside stuff was not so good and some was too small. Personally, I love Captain Nuts, which is a great rip-off of the original, and the Captain America/Iron Man spoof on page 4 was far out. Reaction was by far the best part of Bem, due almost entirely to my letters. (God, have I no shame?)

A Freaky mini-sales-list can be obtained for a 6½p stamp from yours truly, how about a free plug? Anyway, I can't be bothered to write more, so here's looking forward to Bem-9.

Laurence Milsted.

Free plugs in Bem? Whatever next!

Dear Martin,

Thank you for the latest issue of your Mercyful magazine. Since you asked about Capt Nuts, I happen to read the Daily Mail, and I think it was Marvin Gaye who sang "There ain't nothing like the Real Thing". But at least Superswipe's other tracing paper jobs are accurate, which is more than can be said for people like Leslie Stannage. Artwise, the best thing was Mercy's

drawing on page 2, not that I don't dig drama and dynamism, but you've gotta be able to draw real well to get that kind of artwork together (although people like Herb Trimpe have been bluffing their way through for years). Unlike Maurice Cousins (Reaction, Bem-8), I'd have thought that humour was easier to write than the heavy stuff. Which reminds me, thanks for signing my Batman thing, but I would have been content with just the credit on page 2.

I disagree with Hunter Tremayne (it's becoming a national pastime) about longer reviews--unless they're sufficiently objective. I mean, look at page 15, column 2. How is anyone meant to draw a conclusion from that parade of prejudice, pettiness and appalling punning?

Don't tone down the news section too much, Martin. If you must lose something, then drop Tale-Enders! I mean, we can get that in any fanzine (monkey glands indeed!).

As for the Conan article, how are we supposed to take it seriously when it starts off "The first Conan I ever saw was issue 5"!? And, since Hunter asks, almost anything by Eisner beats the crap out of absolutely everything by pretentious, frustrated fine-artists like Barry Smith. And how's that for prejudice & pettiness?

Finally, what do those little rectangles at bottom-left on the comic covers signify?

Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch Rool, OK!

Chris Ash.

Everybody disagrees with Hunter, even Hunter! And I plead guilty to the "appalling punning" charge--but what do you expect after 7 cans of lager? About humour, I find it pretty easy to write, but it's deciding what is funny and what isn't, and the right presentation, that's difficult. -Nige (helping reply to the letters because he works cheap, and does look a little like a trained armadillo... Anyway, that box on the covers tells your average US supermarket computer what's being sold, okay?

Dear Martin,

Herewith some belated comments on Bem-8. As usual, a very entertaining and interesting issue. I'm glad to see that Bem, in addition to the usual details of American news which appear in other zines, strives to present a wide range of comment, this ranging from the "Reg US Pat Off" column to even Nige Edwards' abysmal reviews. Bem seems to be one of the more fan-opinion oriented zines around... it tends to go beyond generalisations. A very good letter column, which only surpasses F/A's by appearing slightly more often; CMN's letter column can usually be missed if you blink too often, and I must admit that CU's "Mail Unlimited" hasn't been as good lately.

Keep up the good work.

Allan J. Palmer.

Dear Martin,

In principle, I support Pete Taylor's views on the censorship question--but only in principle. In an ideal world, of course, children wouldn't be taught to be ashamed of their bodies or of sex, adults wouldn't censor what their children read, and you might be writing capsule reviews on the lines of:

"In the August issue of THOR, Odin confiscates Don Blake's walking stick, so he can't save Jane Foster from being gang-banged by Ulik and friends, in a story called "Troll me Over, In the Clover", while CONAN finally defeats Red Sonja in combat, and we all know what that'll lead to. In DR STRANGE ≠19, Doc and Clea are shockingly careless with their protective spells in "What Mortal Dares Call Umar Grandma?" Next month, Dormammu returns in "Don't Call Me Great-Uncle, Either!"

"Over at DC, WONDER WOMAN finally finds out that babies don't come from clay statues, and the Legion, in SUPERBOY STARRING THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES ≠221, face the aftermath of a wild Christmas party, as Lightning Lad tries to blast Timber Wolf, only to find that Saturn Girl's father is looking for him with an atomic shotgun, while the Orandan Royal Guard strives to arrest Karate Kid for committing lese-majesté. In JLA ≠135, in a story only vaguely reminiscent of the deservedly long-forgotten "Missing In Action -- Five Justice Leaguers", Elliot Maggin sets out to explain exactly why Green Arrow and Black Canary didn't answer the emergency signal last issue. This is the story that is reputed to have caused Dr Frederick Wertham's recent fatal heart attack."

Yes, well, enough of this nonsense. The point is, we don't live in an ideal world. And that, I would estimate, well over 50% of the comics sold are bought for their children by adults who have already been taught to be ashamed of their bodies, etc, and who wouldn't buy any product featuring such goings-on. Not to mention Dr Wertham, Mrs Whitehouse, et al. It's all very well to say we should fight for what we believe in, but what Marvel and DC believe in, basically, is making money, so they're not going to start introducing overt sex into their stories out of an altruistic wish to give children a well-rounded education --and even if they did, they'd stand a pretty good chance of going, or being put, out of business. Oh, and don't say that young parents wouldn't be so censorious--I took a straw poll among six young mothers of my acquaintance, ages varying from 18 to 27 and quite uninhibited themselves, and they all reacted with horror to the idea of their offspring, only one of whom is over 4, being served up sex in the comics.

Kathleen Glancy.

Loved your sexy "Tale-Enders", Emlock was never like that! Yes, let's be liberated and unashamed, Martin is starting it off by editing this issue in his birthday suit, and...((that's quite enough, this is a family zine! -ML))-- Yeah, but you've never seen my family! -Nige

Dear Martin,

I read Bem-8 with interest, it was better than Bem-7 but it still had a few weak points. I think you used a bit too much of Mercy van Vlack's artwork, although most of it was good especially Saturn Girl on the cover. The Leslie Stannage Batman was great, I think the heavy black inking made it even better. What happened to the page 4 funnies? I must admit I don't like Captain Nuts, but this is probably because I don't understand it.

I'm glad to see you're shifting the emphasis away from news, and I look forward to reading the promised articles. Talking of articles, I thought Hunter Tremayne's piece on the Smith Conan was quite good, short and sweet.

Peter Coyle.

Dear Martin,

Thanks for the free ish, good of you to send me one, I'll have to contribute again in the near future. What prompted me to LoC was the reaction (no pun intended) to the Bamboozling spoof that I helped on.

I certainly disagree with Maurice Cousins' remark that only professionals can write humour. What rubbish! Since when was Mad, Sick, Cracked, Crazy and the Beano so hilarious? Humour isn't difficult to write, but you have to want to do it, and not produce to a clock.

As for Weird Trash making some interesting points, that's not what we meant to do; WT is for fun, fandom seems very serious these days so WT brings back comic fundom. If WT does point out a few faults of something else, well count that as an added bonus.

Anyway, a new WT will be out soon, I hope, and fanzine editors tremble before the pain of satire, innuendo and sarcasm.

Pete April.

I can't really argue with your analysis of WT, as I contributed to it as well, but we'll see what next issue's lettercol brings. -Nige

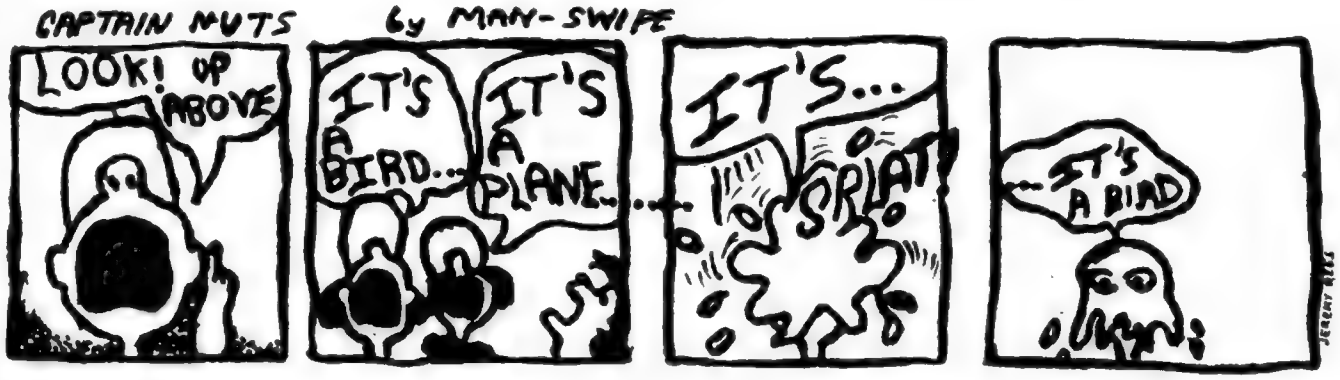
Dear Martin,

Flushed with success at seeing my name in print last time, I'm at it again. Although the censorship thing got some reaction in Bem-8, I was surprised at its mildness, and also the reactionary attitudes of some of the readers.

I was particularly annoyed at Kathleen Glancy's letter, saying that sex and violence in comics should be handled subtly, so that they would be above younger readers. I am continually curious over how great a part comics play in educating (socialising, indoctrinating?) a child. The more subtle this process is, the more it disturbs me. The perpetuation of Western capitalist society is rife in comics. Need I mention the anti-communism of Iron Man and Captain America? This is now subtly disguised by jumping on the bandwagon with social trends -- student rebellion and drugs in Spider-Man, female emancipation in Hulk. But, in the end, radical change is seen as foolhardy, and not worthwhile.

As every good sociologist knows, defined sex rôles and the accompanying guarded attitudes to sex are a necessary prop of capitalist society. "Protecting" our kids from sex is just one more type of indoctrination. Are we helping kids by preserving these attitudes, or hindering them?

Pete Taylor.



I'd like to see more sex & violence in comics, but this basically stems from the fact that I am a sadistic, dirty old man... so, how about the rest of you readers? -Nige

Dear Martin,

I'd like to cast my vote in favour of "Capt Nuts", by the way. It doesn't take up that much space, after all...

Lettercol more lively than usual, (I grow increasingly impressed with Ms Glancy--I refer of course to her censorship arguments, I don't want to give you any more scope...) but as to your reply to my letter, when I said "prolific" I was refering to your writing, sunbeam...your private life is your own business.

Reviews also more acidic than before; (hem) I'm pleased to see a couple of clashes of opinion, as with the Cohen/Tremayne contretemps over Warlord, or the quadrophonic response to Kobra, which makes interesting reading.

Howard Stangroom, Redcar

Martin's "prolific" private life, eh? Well, let me tell you, at the last mart he was upstairs with these four girls and a sheep, and..((er, sorry Nige, but we're running out of room.-ML))

Dear Martin,

Yus, I like your Bemusing very much. I liked a lot of Mercy van Vlack's contributions, it's a welcome change to see some females among the usual Charles Atlas bunch.

By the way, I think anyone who advocates dropping the Comics Code should take a look at the B&W stuff that "Eerie Publications" churn out. Okay we aren't forced to buy it, but it always seems to be this sort of stuff that is shown to the public by reporters.

I got your magazine through the rather weird way of subscribing to CFB. Now I'm glad I did. I'm afraid Captain Nuts is too deep for me. I just didn't understand it; stay away from allegory in the future.

Graeme Bassett.

Sure thing, Graeme! Er... Al who...?

Dear Martin,

I don't think Diana Richmond (Bem-8, page 7) can seriously say that "...comics may become the last outpost of any sort of mass literacy, the main reason that people bother to learn to read at all", because the vast majority of children are taught to read when they are 5-6 years old. They are taught, whether they like it or not, and are forced to learn because it is an essential requirement in later life both in their education and their adulthood. In fact, many children "read" a comic by just looking at the pictures, ignoring the captions and word balloons. Most comics can be "read" in this way; I frequently read boring comics like that, especially if I have a lot of comics to get through. On the subject of pricing, I would say that the best way of avoiding rip-off prices is to avoid the Marts and to buy from shops and by post only, I've done all my buying this way and have yet to be conned.

A few general comments...with Bem-8 I think you've achieved the right balance of contents ...the poetry is a waste of space, but Captain Nuts is quite funny at times and should stay ...perhaps Fan-Things and Tale-Enders could have a bit more space...keep Reaction 3 pages long...print a proper Hulk review for once, this attempt at humour doesn't work and is now becoming a bore...have more Warren & Charlton b&w cover repros...perhaps have a small piece on British distribution every issue...I hope Bemletter is continued, perhaps some extra Tale-Enders could be put in there.

Adrian R. Last.

Bemletter's a small zine, generally containing stuff I couldn't fit into Bem proper--it goes to subscribers only, as a "bonus" for forking out that extra 4p an issue for copies by post. And that finishes another bumper "Reaction"--my thanks to everyone who wrote. -Martin

COMIX COMMENTS

HENRY SANDWICH ON UNDERGROUNDS

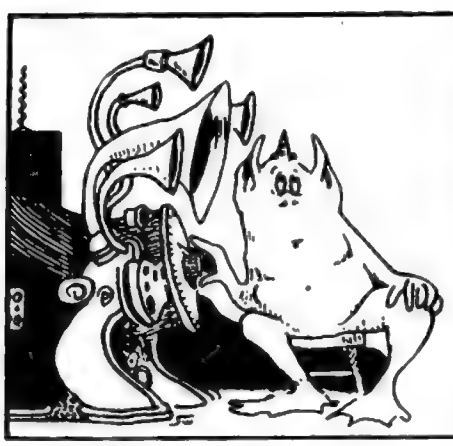
Good afternoon. This is the first of what is likely to be an irregular set of columns on underground comics -- probably as irregular as my contributions to Comic Media News. But why write when you've nothing to say?

The main news this time is that Paul Fisher and Hunt Emerson, the men behind "Dogman" and "Large Cow Comix", are organising a 'Konvention of Alternative Komix", to be held, they hope, at the Birmingham Arts Lab (5 Tower St, B'ham B19 3UY) over the weekend of 2nd, 3rd & 4th July -- the attendance cost is to be £5, which doesn't include accomodation, but does bring a reception (with food and drink) on Friday night, and on Saturday and Sunday such events as exhibitions, talks on creating, publishing, distributing, a comic mart, and an animation programme. This sounds like a fine idea, which can only become definite with support--if you are interested, write to Paul at the Arts Lab right away for details. The idea is to bring British comix fans and creators together, to bring some unity and direction to the scene.

After that, I'd better plug a couple of UK-produced u/g zines. LITRATRIP, from the TBS & Panelologist people 16½p from ATP Comix,

is a well-produced saga by Tony Schofield of a one-way trip through the mind; while BRAIN STORM ≠1 published by Alchemy Publications, and widely distributed through record shops, boutiques, and "head shops") has a nicely inventive 20-page "Chemical Adventure" by Bryan Talbot. A certain similarity in basic concepts, perhaps, but give them time...

But, let us bow to America; recent arrivals include BAREFOOTZ FUNNIES ≠1 by Howard Cruse, which is wickedly funny; BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE 75c FOR THE FABULOUS FURRY FREAK BROTHERS, with the most hilarious Fat Freddy's Cat fable in existence (also in that small-size UK reprint recently put out), and other tales; THE FIRST KINGDOM ≠3 by Jack Katz, triumphantly showing what epic adventure can be; and, at a skull-shredding two dollars, BARBARIAN COMICS ≠4, a mish-mash of good and poor stuff in a rather limiting vein including such artists as James McQuade, Trina, Mike Whelan and Will Meugniot, who recently did a Marvel comic or two -- but, hell, the man has to eat! Responses to this column, c/o Martin, would be welcome. -HS



REVIEW SECTION

ETERNALS #1 (July)
"The Day Of The Gods" by Jack Kirby and John Verpoorten

A distinctly depressing task this. I was tempted to just (yes, I know I'm splitting an infinitive, and I don't care, so there!) dismiss it with a phrase like "Exactly what you knew it was going to be"; after all, everyone knew that this was to be the 'New Gods' transplanted into the Marvel cosmos, right? Right. But there's something rather more depressing than mere predictability about it...

And that, I'm afraid, is the ugly face of Aryanism. Kirby avoided falling into this in the New Gods series: the heroes there had their darker (and, in the case of Orion, uglier) sides, and the villains weren't all deformed and ugly (although admittedly most of them were), and in fact it was one of the nasties from Apokolips who espoused the Aryan cause--remember Glorious Godfrey? But here, even though it is very early days yet, I see no such signs of balance: the good guys, the Eternals, are apparently all perfect specimens of the true Aryan mould (blond hair, Roman nose, etc), the villains, the Deviants (and there's a nice totalitarian name for villains, no?) are all ugly and resemble animals (shades of Kamandi!) (and very ugly animals at that) after whom, in typical Kirby style, they are named (Brother Tode, Kro)--need I go on?

Besides which, sad to say, this series is going to fit into the Marvel cosmos like the proverbial square peg into a round hole. In the gospel according to Kirby (which is not unlike the gospel according to von Daniken & Co.) it wasn't the timeless Kree, or the even older-established Skrulls, who first colonised this much-visited planet of ours, but the 'Gods'. Apparently, when they dropped in on us the highest life form around was the ape, which they proceeded to evolve into higher life forms (now where have I heard that before...?) such as humans, Deviants, and Eternals. How all this fits into the recently-unfolded Marvel History of the Universe I wouldn't know.

And <u>that</u>'s not all... Furthermore, these Deviants turn out to be a hitherto unknown race of beings (does that sound familiar?) who all differ from each other in appearance and (I presume) power (sound even more familiar?) and live in a hidden city inaccessible to humankind--Nuff said? (What was the name of that race Kirby dreamed up, back when he was doing FF? The Inhospitables? Inhibiteds? It'll come to me in a minute...)

And even that's not all...

Y'see, these Deviants have this habit of causing aircraft to disappear over the particular bit of ocean they happen to be operating in (somewhere in the area of Bermuda I think), which would be bad enough in itself, even if Marvel wasn't already using a different explanation for the non-existent, so-called Bermuda Triangle in Skull the Slayer.

Yeah well, like I said, depressing...Kirby may still officially be King, but who believes in monarchy any more? -K. Williams

SUPERMAN VS. THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
"The Battle of the Century" by Gerry Conway, Ross Andru, Dick Giordano & Terry Austin

For such a monumental event in comic history, rivalled only by the first issue of Shazam, you would expect an equally monumental review. This is not it. One is reminded of the meeting between Harlan Ellison and Isaac Asimov. The old and the new. In particular the quote, said by Ellison, "You aren't so much".

Ross Andru is not one of my favourite artists. He has his high moments, most of them have been included in the story. Gerry Conway on the other hand has produced some very good stories--this is not one of them. But, let's be fair, the story wrote itself, it was bound to, and we shouldn't blame Conway for adding his name to it. What will be the effect on the future of comics now? The answer is with us; take a look at the new English Spider-Man, the heading in particular, "SUPER SPIDER-MAN". Will DC strike back with the "Spidey Superman"? It certainly has a ring to it. -Richard Ashford

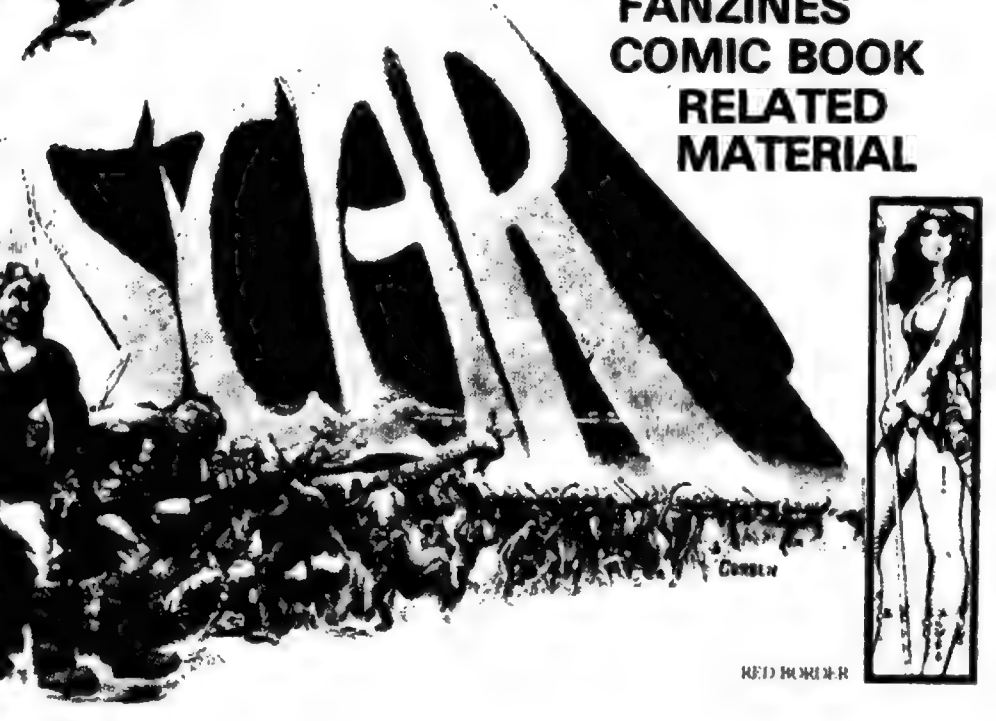
continued...

Robert E. Howard's
CONAN
BLACK BORDER

L YOU NEED DO TO GET THE
T IS SEND A STAMPED, SELF
DRESSED ENVELOPE TO:

COLIN CAMPBELL
'BIYTOO' PLAINS ROAD
GT. TOTHAM, MALDON
ESSEX, ENGLAND

PRINTS, POSTERS
FANZINES
COMIC BOOK
RELATED
MATERIAL



RED BORDER

"SITTING HERE PUZZLED" (An Opinion)

"Was in a frenzy from the midnight air
When I saw the light
I realized only children can live
Upon a timeless flight..."
-Steve Harley, "All Men Are Hungry"

And I sit here and I wonder.

Alone in my thoughts I read and re-read, trying all the time to decipher all the images of unanswered thoughts and informed questions that fly about my head. Trying all the time to determine exactly what it was I felt, and the consequences of any final opinion I might have.

I know that I did (albeit superficially) have a Good Time.

The story is competent, the art is vast in scale and excellance. It is, at the very least, a good comic, whatever that means. But something jarred, and shouts for a voice.

I despair of ever being able to clarify that something.

A different tangent, then?

Ah, the old Marvel-DC feud, perhaps? Two comics universes, each fantastic in subject and conception, but with one striving perpetually to rationalize the fantasy. But, does a fantasy need to be rational? There are those that would take issue with that point!

This comic is a journey to and from the fantastic and the sublime, a journey laced with repercussions and mindless fun. (By that please don't read "banal"; read "An Alien Heat" by Moorcock for an example.) A sales vehicle. A novelty.

There are three possible results of this tome's sales success: DC may inject a shade more "realism" into their product; Marvel may become more elastic with their premises; they may create together a new corporate universe, (which is not as unfeasible as you might at first think, considering Cadence (Marvel's parent company) are thinking of selling their sibling to Warner (DC's daddy)). They are all possible, for no ideal is so sacred it cannot be bought or sold.

Superficially, this is a"first". It could, well, be the first of the last.

I still am uncertain of many of the problems this comic poses, and have no answers to feed unborn questions. There is a huge question mark hovering over this comic, Marvel, DC and my mind.

Here's to some answers. -Hunter Tremayne

IRON MAN ANNUAL ≠3 (1976)
"More or Less...The Return of the Molecule Man" by Gerber, Sal Buscema, & Abel

With Steve Gerber in charge, this is more like a Man-Thing annual, as he ties Iron Man into Manny's mythos. Now, if only Steve could take over IM's own mag...

Well worth buying, but unfortunately only available at import prices. -Nige Edwards

CLAW ≠5 (February)
"Grimstone Quest" by Michelinie & Chua

Claw and his new partner, Ghilkyn, set out to find the key called "Grimstone" that will open the door to the dimension where a mystic sword is held; when it has been recovered, it will be used by Claw for his own purposes.

There, that's a short summary of Michelinie's tale full of monsters, madmen, and people who want power. David tries too hard to make Claw another Conan, and relies too much on the sorcery side of S & S; and, even though Chua is back on inks and pencils, the magazine seems to suffer storywise. -Jan Garczynski

FANTASTIC FOUR ≠168 (March)
"Where Have All The Powers Gone?" by Roy Thomas, Rich Buckler & Joe Sinnott

With my infatuation with super-teams, I've got to mention my favourite comic for six years, yes? First, let's get this straight. Buckler (like Andru, Perez and J. Buscema) has only done the layouts on this issue, so blame Joey Sinnott for beautiful art. In this issue Ben Grimm is replaced by Power Man--all I can say is, come back Thing. The best part of this ish is Mr Grimm's preference of his two forms --"come back Bem, all is forgiven". -DJE

TARZAN ≠250 (June)
"Tarzan the Untamed" part one, by Conway, Garcia-Lopez, and the Redondo Studio

Me Orlando, you readers! Me new editor, me introduce Jane and me kill Jane off! Me bring out best issue of Tarzan for many moons! Law of jungle say only strong survive, now Tarzan comic strong! You buy! -Nige Edwards

SPIDER-MAN ≠155 (April)
"Whodunit" by Wein, Sal Buscema & Esposito

I can't resist telling you the ending. You see, what happens is--uhh, Solarman and Starr! Unggh! Gerroff, I wasn't... Oof! -clunk-

"Well, that stopped him, eh, Starr?"

"It certainly did, Soley. Well, where do we go from here?"

"All Star Magazine ≠1, of course!"

"Oh, yeah, I forgot..."

"Look out Photon, here we come!" -DJE

I think Edge has sneaked a free plug in...

HULK ≠200 (June)
"An Intruder in the Mind" by Len Wein, Sal Buscema, and Joe Staton

"This is it!" quoth the blurb, as blurbs are wont to quoth. "What is what?" you ask? Good question. This is Hulk ≠200 (which of course isn't the 200th Anniversary issue of the Hulk, as the blurb implies, since the first hundred or so issues were Tales to Astonish, but never mind...), and it's a whole lot of nothing much really. Perhaps the fact that it isn't a genuine anniversary influenced the making of it, 'cause it certainly doesn't feel like a special issue. Oh, there is one anniversary tradition that is slavishly observed: viz. the "appearance" of hosts of old foes, appearance being the key word, since (as usual) they're only images, not the actual villains. But that's the only thing that strikes me as being in any way "special".

The story itself is yet another replay of "Fantastic Voyage", which of course has been done more than once before, and done a damn sight better too. (Glenn Talbot's got a very peculiar brain, that's all I can say...) I would say more about the story, but there isn't any more...

The art's okay; Staton's inks are of course superb, and Sal Buscema's pencils are for the most part competent, if uninspired. But, if I had my druthers, I druther have Trimpe art and a Roy Thomas script to go with it. I see in the lettercol that Hulk is still one of Marvel's best sellers. I just wish someone would tell me why... -K. Williams

MARVEL PREMIERE ≠28 (February)
The Legion of Monsters in "There's a Mountain on Sunset Boulevard" by Bill Mantlo, Frank Robbins & Steve Gan

Marvel's answer to the monster mash? Bill Mantlo brings together 4 of the most unlikely partners ever, to discover the mystery of the mountain that suddenly appeared from nowhere on Sunset Boulevard.

Although Bill tries his best to keep the reader interested, he seems to fail in places and the tale seems to read like a quickie to make fast money. I try my hardest to tolerate Robbins' artwork, but can't seem to like it... although Steve Gan handles the inking over Frank's pencils, it seems to make little or no difference, and the Legion of Monsters looks doomed. -Jan Garczynski

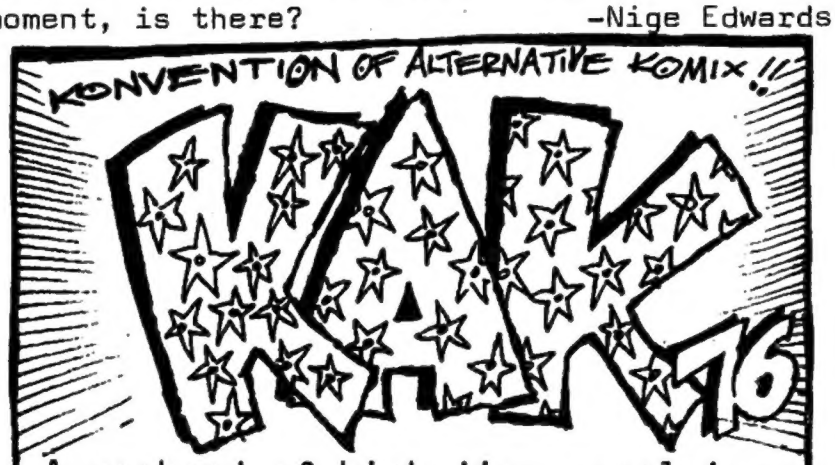
KAMANDI ≠39 (March)
"The Airquarium" by Conway, Kirby & Royer

With Conway as the writer, it makes the dialogue more flexible -- it does, though, take away the bit of Kirby magic that I've grown to love. Kamandi's personality seems a bit too mature for my liking, and we see the beginings of a first love for Kamandi. The thing is, in previous issues he only seems about 14-16; now he seems to have grown up about six years.

Without Kirby on art, I can only give this book ten more issues before it's discontinued. Chic Stone on art? Ye-uckk! -Dave J. Edge

SPIDER-MAN ≠158 (July)
"Hammerhead is Out" by Wein, Andru & Esposito

After recently teaming up with Superman to beat Doc Ock, Spidey now teams up with Doc to beat Hammerhead. Plus G.I. Joe fights the Intruder, and, with the aid of Hostess Twinkies, Captain America saves the USA and the Bicentennial from the Red Skull. Ah, never a dull moment, is there? -Nige Edwards



A weekend of high jinx revolving round the British alternative comix media, planned for JULY 2nd 3rd & 4th, at THE ARTS LAB, TOWER ST. BIRMINGHAM B19 3UY.
For this extravaganza (including chats, animation programme, deep meaningful discussions & mindless revelry) we need a minimum of 50 fanatics, and we need to know immediately. Write today to PAUL FISHER or HUNT EMERSON and tell 'em you'll come!!
******SEE PAGE 17**********

CAPTAIN AMERICA ≠195 (March)
"It's 1984" by Jack Kirby & D. Bruce Berry

This is how I like it! D. Bruce Berry on inks and letters! A 2-page spread! Corny dialogue! Kirby monsters! Plenty of action & black-lipped women! Not to mention inverted commas...

Not much I can say about this issue without giving the plot away, but if I say I've never seen Kirby art this good since the New Gods, will you buy it? I've a strange feeling that these early Kirby issues are gonna be the most sought-after comics since the 4th World! -DJE

HOUSE OF HAMMER ≠1 (GBD, 30p, monthly)

Here's Dez Skinn's new prozine, with 29 pages of comics by Paul Neary (stylized, static and disappointing), Ian Gibson and Angus McKie. A combination of Legend Horror Classics & World of Horror, it should succeed... -Jonn Hay

THE COLLECTOR
D'YA SELL MARVEL COMICS— BUB?
IN... "A VISIT TO THE NEWSAGENT."
WE ONLY SELL SEAB---- UGH!
THAT'S WHUT AH THOUGHT!
SMAK
WILL YA GIDDADAHERE, CREEP!!
CHARACTER ©1976 BY SEABOARD PUBLICATIONS INC--ANYBODY OUT THERE REMEMBER THEM?

Bemusing's Artist of the Month, Mike Lake, can be found working most days of the week at that well-known emporium of fancies & fantasy, Dark They Were And Golden Eyed. "I'm an old-fashioned kind of lad, petal", he told Bemusing recently, between serving customers. "I know what I like, and I like what I know."

Mike lists his hobbies as advancing graphic art's boundaries, tea-drinking, and mugging little old ladies and Nick Landau; his major ambition is to find out if he can draw while sober, thus almost doubling his working hours.

Mark our words, this talented young artist will soon be a name to reckon with!

UP, UP AND OI VAY REVISITED

A couple of letters appeared in last issue's "Reaction" on the subject of censorship. A curious case of censorship of a kind occurred in that same issue a few pages earlier. Page 4 carried a picture of Captain America wearing a pair of rather badly-drawn Y-fronts. Upon this garment a symbol appeared, in shape resembling a Star of David. However, the inner outlines of the overlapping triangles had been whited out. I'm not quite sure why this was done, or who was responsible (maybe Martin or his printer friend with the strung-up trousers).

Let me say that in drawing this cartoon my intentions were not in the slightest anti-Semitic. If not for men such as Siegel, Kirby, Shuster, Lee, Kurtzman and Eisner would I be sitting here writing this? Would there be a 'Bemusing' to print it in?

The comic-book super-hero is a purely Jewish invention. George Perry in "The Penguin book of Comics" observed that the Spirit was "nothing more than the Wandering Jew in a modern guise". metaphorically speaking, every body-stockinged descendant of Superman sports St. Michael underwear beneath his Middle-American mantle.

This of course lends itself to the even stranger argument that, had it not been for Hitler and his enforcement of the "Aryan Superman" myth, the comic-book super-hero, as we know him today, might never have existed.

It is solely the turmoil of recent history that has caused the "comic" to be taken out of the comic strip. First the tragedy and traumas of the Depression years gave rise to adventure heroes such as Tarzan, Flash Gordon, and the Phantom, but it took the impending holocaust of the Second World War to spawn a "Superman".

The humour strip, of course, has been deeply affected also, giving rise to the political parodies of "Pogo" and "Flook" and the psycho-sociological humour of Schulz and Feiffer, who bring us back to the original subject of my opening lines. How come censorship in Bemusing, Martin? -Chris Ash

I don't think it was censorship, Chris; rather a little something called "editing". It was my opinion that having Captain America in pants with an ordinary star on was funny, while the use of a Jewish star was merely puzzling--had I had time to check that it was deliberate, I would have, but, like too much sometimes, it was a last-minute job, I'm afraid. But if my whiting-out job brought such an interesting mini-article on the Jewish influence in comics (a similar situation exists in SF--Gernsback, Pines, Ferman, Margulies, Gold, Wollheim, Tenn, Asimov, Bester, Kuttner, Weinbaum, Kornbluth, Bloch, Ellison, Silverberg...), then it was all worthwhile. Comments, anyone? -ML

RICH MORRISSEY'S AMERICA

The DC Con? Well, the programme in the con booklet wasn't exactly accurate--for one thing, the hotel was changed at the last minute to the Americana because of a strike at the Commodore (which will soon be closing for good). My most memorable moment? Going to dinner with E.N.B., and running right into guests of honour Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. All's well between them and National now -- Jerry was an old friend of Nelson's from the early '60's collaboration on Superman--and Jerry Ess might even be writing some new Superman stories! (Parenthetically, though, right now Cary Bates is being augmented largely by Marty Pasko, what with Conway's return to Marvel and Elliot Maggin's switch of editors.) I also went to lunch with Jim Shooter and a number of other fans the next day, and won a piece of original art (which I still haven't seen) in a trivia contest.

Sunday was most memorable as a "fannish day"; I met fans-turned-pro Carl Gafford and John Workman for about two seconds, which were all Carl at least had off, and many others, such as Angelique Trouvere (stripper extraordinaire, and frequenter of costume parades). Then at Superman's party we all got a piece of cake, and -- what are those cakes Supes and everyone else at all the companies is pushing?--I also got to talk to new publisher Jennette Kahn (egoboo of the month; she recognised my name) about her plans for the line--quite exciting!

Such as? Well, with Conway leaving, his editorial duties will be divided between Joe Orlando, Paul Levitz and Bob Rozakis, while Marty Pasko, Elliot Maggin and Dave Kraft will probably script most of the features he was writing. SHAZAM! is now a Giant with some new material; new, more realistic stories in the TV vein (with Uncle Dudley as a Mentor-type) are being prepared by Bridwell and Schaffenberger. Cap's television co-star, Isis, makes her comic-book debut in a solo story by O'Neil and Giordano in Shazam 25; then she spins off to her own book. Another TV-inspired book is SUPER-FRIENDS, in which four JLAers establish an academy for young people interested in law enforcement careers -- it's from Joe Orlando. Other revivals include Teen Titans, Sugar and Spike, Green Arrow/Black Canary, Challengers of the Unknown (in new, tentatively 33-page, stories in Super-Team Family), and possibly the Secret Six. -RHM

EMLOCK TALE-ENDERS

Spider-Man taking second billing on a cover again, so soon after his run-in with Superman? That's the situation in MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ≠17, as the Thing of course comes first on the cover --it is his book, after all, though with the team of Bill Mantlo, Sal Buscema & Esposito, you'd be forgiven for thinking it was Marvel Team-Up. If the schedules hadn't been changed, it would have been, and the tale in Team-Up 47 which concludes the battle with the Basilisk would have been in Two-In-One. Confusing, eh?

SPIDEY SUPER STORIES is still going, with ≠17 being the special bicentennial (July) issue guest-starring Captain America. If you collect appearances of Iceman, Dr Strange, Hulk, Thor, or Kang, you need it, I'm afraid. In the letter column of SPIDER-MAN ≠158, one missive's about the Superman/Spider-Man book, saying "it didn't happen here" in the Marvel Universe. As I tend to think it was Spidey's Earth-1 equivalent in that story, I agree.

MARVEL FEATURE ≠5, featuring as usual Red Sonja by Bruce Jones and Frank Thorne, has a "Marvel Masterwork Pin-Up" no less by Far-Out Frank himself instead of a lettercol--while I would prefer a realistic artist such as Dick Giordano, I must admit I'm getting to like the Thorne version. Meanwhile, elsewhere in the Hyborian Age, there's the June SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN (≠12), with the 7-page third chapter of the Thomas/Simonson adaptation of "The Hyborian Age", features, and the 48-page "The Haunters of Castle Crimson" REH tale, as brought to us by Thomas, John Buscema, and his best inker, Alfredo Alcala. But, next time, the artist is, they promise, one Neal Adams...

MASTER OF KUNG FU ≠42 is Moench/Gulacy/Tom Sutton, and pretty nice--they promise that Fu Manchu will return soon. SKULL ≠6 is the Jaws covers rip-off of the month, with Scully & his human co-stars back among his reptilian co-stars (the dinosaurs!)--good work from Bill Mantlo, Sal Buscema, and Steve Gan. "The Man Who sold the United States" is Jack Kirby's title for CAPTAIN AMERICA ≠199. You know, the change from Robbins to Kirby on art hasn't been as drastic as I'd expected. The change from Englehart to Kirby on story, though...

And TOMB OF DRACULA ≠46 (Marv/Gene/Tom) has Toothy getting married--soon we'll be hearing the patter of tiny fangs in this book!

ACTION 460 (June) has the first half of a Superman tale by Bates, Swan & Tex Blaisdell -- but the high-spot is the back-up by Maggin & Schaffenberger starring Mr Mxyzptlk, in which he meets not Supes but Jonathan (son of Pete) Ross. Not a classic, true...but entertainment!

HERCULES UNBOUND ≠5, by Conway, Garcia-Lopez, and Wood, is a nice issue of one of the best of the new titles -- I hope Conway left a few scripts for it when he flitted off to Marvel. It's an intriguing series, I find--which is a lot more than can be said for ≠9 of the now monthly KUNG FU FIGHTER, with the usual Estrada layouts fleshed out by, strangely enough, Ric Estrada! STAR SPANGLED WAR STORIES ≠200 sees the book back on a bi-monthly schedule--that's a way to celebrate? There's a 5-page new back-up Enemy Ace tale by Joe Kubert, though -- now that is a way to celebrate!

DC SUPER-STARS ≠4 is a Space issue, like ≠2, and Adam Strange takes the lead again, with a story reprinted from Mystery In Space ≠91--so that's the very last Fox/Infantino tale of the series. What next? Also included are Captain Comet and Space Ranger reprints.

WORLD'S FINEST ≠238 features the Super Sons, along with Luthor and his daughter -- that's a good deal? I think I prefer the Hostess Fruit Pie ad, with the Joker as "The Cornered Clown". TWITCHING HOUR ≠64 has Cruz, Gernale & Calnan, while SHAZAM ≠24 (Spring) has a Beck reprint from 1953, and "Captain Marvel Jr in the Days of Robin Hood" drawn by Bud Thompson. KAMANDI ≠42 is still imitation Kirby, though it is I think starting to develop a new personality; while SUPERMAN FAMILY ≠177 has a badly composed cover, with the main figure's face obscured by the logo, the side-pictures disappearing off the edge, and a gap where a word should be. It stars Supergirl, by the way...

DETECTIVE ≠460 starts an interesting Batman series, as Captain Stingaree sets out to snare all 3 Batmen! By page 11 he's got one, too... In the back, welcome private investigator Tim Trench, written by O'Neil. Don't blink, he's unlikely to stay around long.

And that's that. See you next time! -ML